

DROWNED GOLD

ROY NORTON

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“I WISH TO SEND YOU TO FRANCE WITH JUST THREE MILLION DOLLARS’ WORTH OF GOLD” (page 77)

DROWNED GOLD

BEING THE STORY
OF A SAILOR'S LIFE

BY
ROY NORTON



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TO
CHARLES AGNEW MACLEAN, Esq.
A VERY LOYAL AND STEADFAST FRIEND
WITHOUT WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT
AND SUGGESTIONS
THIS TALE WOULD HAVE REMAINED UNTOLD

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Drawn by J. D. Whiting

DROWNED GOLD

Being the Story of a Sailor's Life

PART I

CHAPTER I

THREE is one word that I can't see on a map, or on the stern of a ship, or elsewhere, that does n't cause me to smile, and that word is "Esperanza." And if ever a man had a well-confirmed right to smile at the sight of something always suggestive, I deem myself justified; for from beginning to end, from the day I first read that name until now, never did a name enter more conspicuously into a man's life than it did into mine. It made me, unmade me, made me again, undid me again, and finally put me where I am.

As a start, I was born on a "wind-jammer," called the *Esperanza*, and owned by my father, while she labored most valiantly for her life in a tropical hurricane, and aboard which my mother was voyaging for her health. A young doctor who had opportunely taken a cheap passage from Boston to Trinidad, by dint of clinging to stanchion and life-line, reached my father's side and belellowed the news that there was another passenger aboard, and my father, who had been on watch and fighting the storm for nearly twenty-four hours, turned haggard, anxious eyes to the doctor's face, and shouted, "And — my wife?"

"As well as could be expected, sir."

“Thank God!” my father replied, and bellowed an order to the helmsman. He did not ask concerning me, it appears. It was twenty hours later before he saw me, and not until the hurricane had begun to break, and he had “shot the sun.” It is therefore a matter of fairly accurate record that my birthplace was about $65^{\circ} 30' W.$ by $24^{\circ} 30' N.$, and it would seem that I belong to the sea by parentage and heredity, as well as by first appearance. My father prospered from that day, in his own way, clinging always to his faith in God’s brave winds to speed his fortunes, and scorning steam. When he came to be the owner of a considerable fleet of “wind-jammers,” and retired to the home he built near Cotuit, Massachusetts, — where he could always hear the roar of the sea, — and found it best to incorporate his holdings into a company of which he owned nearly eighty per cent of the stock, he chose the name of “The Esperanza Sailing Company.” He was a stern and bearded man, sparing of speech or display of affection; but I knew that he loved me when he chose that name. I could have handled a full-rigger before I was sixteen years of age, save for lack of that wisdom which is gained only by experience, and I was not happy on that day, when, coming into harbor as second mate of the Esperanza III, my father gruffly told me that I was not to go out with her again. I had hoped that I should be given the first mate’s berth, at least.

“My friend, Congressman Walker,” my father continued, without a word of praise for my achievements, solicitous inquiry for my health, or mark of affection, “has got you an appointment to Annapolis. You are to go there by the next train, report yourself, and be examined to see whether all that I have spent in time, money, and personal effort for your education, have been wasted. If you can qualify and then stick it through, you will become a sailor for your country, a gentleman by training, and” — his voice broke queerly and became husky, — “your mother and I will be very proud of you!”

My heart pumped savagely. I suddenly discerned that my father was getting old, and should have liked to put my arms around him, there on the deck, but dared not, for I had always stood in awe of him. I saw through a mist brought on by this remarkable betrayal of his feelings; and when I lifted my eyes he was trudging sturdily away over the dock, with his sailor's balanced and unmistakable stride.

I had never even thought of going to Annapolis. "Kid-gloved sailors," we who had been educated with tar on our hands called those gentlemen of the Navy; but I drew my wages at my father's office and obeyed his command. I passed the preliminary examinations and was entered on the Naval Academy's register before I wired him of my success. I still have his letter in reply:

Telegrams are one of two things, the necessities of urgent business, or the extravagance of fools. The one you sent us doubtless cost two shillings, where a two-cent stamp would have served as well. But — what I said on the dock still stands on the log. Your mother is sending you six pairs of woolen socks she knit herself. Doubtless she will write.

But the letter did n't hurt. I knew him too well. I read between the lines all that his heart cried, but which his hands were dumb to write.

He came to see me once, at the Academy, and strode like an old viking around the grounds, silent, grim, but observing. He was there nearly a whole hour, and I was astounded when the Commandant in passing us suddenly stopped, rushed toward him, ignoring me, and called him by his first name, not only with evidence of respect, but affection. My father waved me away, and for a long time these two superiors of mine of whom I stood in awe, paced backward and forward over the parade. I was actually astonished when my father laughed at something the Commandant said, and did not know until years had passed that these two had been boyhood shipmates and friends.

My father was not there when I graduated, but sent messages by my mother. He was too busy experimenting with a yacht that he had built mostly with his own hands on extemporized ways, and that he had caused to be laid down just where the lawn of our garden in Cotuit met the beach. He came aboard the first ship to which I was ordered, and gravely inspected her from fore to aft, making no comment, asking now and then a question, and staring up at her basket masts as if disapproving of anything in top-hamper that could not carry sail. He fought shy of introductions, sniffed at the luxury of my cabin, merely poked his head into the ward room, and neglected to look back at me after he stepped on the deck landing of the side ladder; but I saw that for a long time he stood on the edge of the pier where he was landed, staring at the cruiser. Again I had that strange, crying desire to go ashore and put my arms around him; and somehow my awe and reverence increased, and there came to me with poignancy the knowledge that I had never fully appreciated his rugged worth and native greatness. I sustained some immense wish to melt from him the hardened outer shell and know the splendid love and warmth that glowed fervently beneath! I always remember him thus, standing on the edge of the pier, firmly set upon his legs and feet, and scanning with a sailor's clear eye the ship on which his only son abode, for it was the last time I ever saw him.

And I've told of him that one may understand why, being the son of such a father, speech, exposition of inner feelings, or an outward show of emotion, have been difficult to me throughout my life.

By a certain exploit, which does n't matter now, while in command of a new submarine, I gained some favor, and, more as vacation given as reward, I think, was one of the lucky ones chosen to go on one of our best cruisers sent abroad to a certain regatta to represent the United States in a rather imposing array of squadrons. And I conceive this to be the beginning of the game that Fate

had set wherein four of us were to play as best we might; for it was in a meeting in that foreign land that the first three of us who were to participate in the adventure came together.

There are no blue-water men afloat who do not know of Torbay, that rare and beautiful indentation in the Devonshire coast of England. There are but few globe-trotters who have not visited it, and those who have not are to be pitied. Noble cliffs and headlands, all variegated with beautiful colors, ranging from brilliant reds to somber grays, scarcely altered in appearance since those stirring days when the great Armada was given its death-blow almost in their shadows, shelter this queen of bays. Scarcely changed is it since the day when the great Napoleon paced the deck of a British warship at anchor and sighed to rest on those beautiful shores. Names that thrill the history of the seas are connected with it; Drake, Raleigh, Nelson, and a score of others knew it well, and sometimes adventured from it. On its shores still stands the ancient abbey where a great Spanish sea captain, defeated, was entertained. And even then Torquay was a city of delight. When we steamed into it on that placid August morning, and saluted and were met by thunderous salutes in return, the bay was filled not only with trim yachts, but by men-o'-war from all nations, come to represent their countries, and Torquay was in gala attire for the anticipated visit of a king and queen.

Very well do I remember that it was on the second day after our arrival, when there came, dancing and curtsying over the tiny sparkling waves, a gay little motor-boat from whose jack fluttered an American flag. It was that which attracted my attention; for our flag, alas! was not so familiar a sight as it should have been in foreign bays. A girl was at the wheel, and such a girl! She wore no hat, and the sun caught glints of fire from hair that was like profuse red gold. Her face, uplifted, was such a one as we who love our country, and have pride in her, like to

idealize as the American woman's face, calm and dignified in repose, but ever ready to laughter, to light, and to friendliness. She gave an order in a voice that was like a rich contralto note fitted to the sea, and the man stopped his engines, then reversed, and the boat came to a beautiful and well-executed halt. A great bulk of a man, seated in the stern, hailed, and there was that in his face that spoke of command and of great seas. No one could have been more surprised than I when he asked if Lieutenant-Commander Thomas Hale was aboard. I had never met my visitor; but saw, as he came up the side ladder, that he was gnarled and twisted, and suffering, evidently from rheumatism.

"You are Mr. Hale?" he queried, when, assisted by two seamen, he reached the deck and confronted me. "Your father, old Tom, and I are lifelong friends," he continued, in his heavy voice that came astonishingly from one so perceptibly an invalid. "He wrote me that you were coming. I am Sterritt, Henry Sterritt."

"Captain Sterritt, of the Sterritt Salvage and Wrecking Company?" I replied, recalling that name that was distinguished by a hundred tales of his valor over our wind-swept Atlantic coast, and that had always been coupled in my mind with storms, gallant rescues, and fearless endeavor. Not a hamlet of the New England coast that had not some story to tell of his deeds, of his honor, of how he might have accumulated wealth had he not shared with his little army of valiant men. The story of the wrecking tug, *Eagle*, fighting her way with this man at the wheel, to rescue those aboard a liner lost off Shovels Shoals, still thrilled the minds of clean American youth.

"This is my daughter, Marty," he explained, and I was acutely conscious of her presence. I had never seen such a woman as this! Tall she was, and strong, and lithe. Taller than most women, as I knew by comparison, for I am an inch above the American "six-foot," and her eyes were but little below the level of mine. A man who is



"THIS IS MY DAUGHTER, MARTY," HE EXPLAINED

above normal height never fails to note, with a little of surprise, when he meets eyes so nearly level with his own. And strong she was, for I, who am so inordinately broad-shouldered, observe such characteristics. Long previous I had become accustomed to being called "The Viking," and yet, I swear, as she stood there, with the breeze ruffling her hair, and the glint of the waves reflected from the seas in the infinite depths of her blue and fearless eyes, the appellation came to me like a shock, for here stood before me one who might have fought valiantly with the sea-rovers of old. It was fitting that she should have sprung from the loins of that old lion of the sea, who, come to sad days of torture and travail, stood, gnarled, bent, and pain-racked, by her side.

"Is it a visiting day, or do we intrude?" she asked, with an abrupt and mischievous smile.

The ice was broken, but I felt abashed; for I stood there like one dumbfounded by some blazing glory of light.

I laughed to hide my embarrassment.

"There are still seven days in a week," I said. "And of these, on such an occasion, there are but two when visitors are denied. This is not one of them." And I had a sufficient recovery of my senses to conduct them from a place where a file of marines, trying to appear unconcerned, but with yawning ears, hovered about, and where a strange amount of ship duties seemed to draw a considerable number of deck men. And it was thus I first met one who was to play a part in my life, a part that was not to be without a clash, such as was given when a mystic of old struck loudly upon a gong calling its hearers to war; for ours was not the smooth way of the firm lands, but befitting those who, being of the sea, dwell upon, yet struggle perpetually with it.

CHAPTER II

IT was at the very memorable reception given to a king and queen in the Princess Pier Concert Hall where I first met the third pawn of Fate. For a whole week we had been lying there, with gala decorations, in Torbay. There had been a display of illuminated ships, in which, I am proud to think, our own had not been outdone. From fighting-top to water-line we had pricked her out with toy lights, at the expense of much effort and of more work than comes when coaling. We had been overrun with visitors. We had been on constant parade. But never a day passed when I had not made occasion to see Miss Marty Sterritt!

The reception was much like all such. The guests had been allowed to inspect royalty at close range; there had been the customary national anthems, the disappearance of royalty, the lowering of the plush and gilt line that hedged them off from the others, and a fine band had reappeared in undress uniform. I had vainly tried to get a few words with Marty Sterritt, but had been discomfited by the fact that she seemed too popular to be left alone, and that there were many who craved introductions and the privilege of a number on her card. And in particular I noticed a German naval lieutenant, a junior, as could be told by his uniform. He was talking to her when I succeeded in giving her my salutations, and she was still laughing at something he had said. He bowed to me from the hips forward, as I came upon them, and she extended her white and capable hand.

"You must meet Count Waldo von Vennemann," she said, and introduced us. Even as I shook hands with him I remembered having heard his name frequently, not only from her own lips, but in connection with certain humorous escapades of dare-devilry, and that his rank alone had saved him from his Imperial Master's wrath.

I admit, here and now, after all that has since happened, that I liked him. There was something magnetic in his frank smile, his hearty laugh, his clear eyes; yes, in his very youthfulness and virility. He spoke English without the slightest trace of an accent, and I learned, later, that his knowledge of America was astonishing.

"The count and I are old friends," Miss Sterritt said, and smiled as at some quaint recollection.

"Yes," he said, with his flashing smile. "Once when I bolted from home in quest of adventure, I worked for just five days for Mr. Henry Sterritt. Then he fired me!"

They laughed together, and she completed the story by adding, "Mr. Vennemann pretended to be a diver. He — a diver! And the worst of it was, after father discharged him, we could n't get rid of him, because on the very night following his dismissal he called at our house, in dress-clothes, if you please, and offered father a cigar from a gold case, and asked how the salvaging business was proceeding since it had lost his valuable services!"

"But I got the best of it," the count parried. "I did get to watch the raising of the *Scudder of Boston*."

"By paying father passage and 'prog' money."

"But I got to see it, just the same, and twice they let me go down in a diver's suit —"

"When father was n't there!"

"Of course! But I did, just the same."

He laughed heartily now, and I began to surmise that his reputation for strange pranks was not unearned. I actually began to respect him for his persistence; but I was not unaware of it when he calmly refused to be shaken off as Marty Sterritt took my arm and suggested that we get away from the somewhat over-warm ballroom, and stroll out into the Pier Gardens for which Torquay is famed; for he walked with us, immaculate, distinguished, graceful, and conversational. I envied him his ability to entertain, as I have always envied those who can talk freely and fluently on any topic, for we who are called quiet men

are not always unsociable by instinct: merely tongue-bound unfortunates, who spend much time in thinking what we might possibly say to prove that we are neither churls nor misanthropes.

I met the count aboard his own ship, where he made himself most agreeable, and, in turn, when he visited our cruiser, tried to return his hospitality; but I could not but feel a vague annoyance when, each time I visited the Sterritts, I found him there. And I admit this the more readily with the confession that never had I met one who absorbed so much of my thought as Marty Sterritt. The day when we received sailing orders was a sad one for me, who would have liked to loiter on the waters of Torbay, so conveniently within reach of Torquay and all it held, indefinitely. We slipped away after making our good-byes, and, as the cruiser felt the first big swell off Berry Head, capped with its ruined fort and modern light, I could see through my glasses two figures walking along the front by Princess Gardens, and knew them to be Marty Sterritt and Count Waldo von Vennemann. I sighed tempestuously, knowing that he had been left in a clear field to win her favor.

There was a strained diplomatic situation between our country and Turkey, and thither we went to lie idly through the fall months, wearying of Pera and Constantinople. Suddenly we returned westward, and awaited orders in Naples. And it was my turn for the clear field; for scarcely had we dropped anchor before an invitation came to visit the Sterritts, now domiciled in a hotel on the famous sea-front drive, and I lost no time. Captain Sterritt, despite all that climate and medical advice could do for him, was steadily failing. I was shocked by the change in his appearance. Moreover, there had come a great alteration in Marty, who seemed depressed, subdued, and fearful. I learned to know the longing to shield, and comfort, there in those days; for I gravely feared that the valiant old man was making his last fight, doggedly and

grimly, but traveling steadily to defeat. Nature, against whom he had battled all his life, was preparing the stroke of grace.

Time and again words struggled within me to tell his daughter that if the spark of his life expired, I wished her to look to me as her rock of refuge. Time and again I stammered on the brink of telling all that was in my heart for her, and ever my tongue failed, curbed not only by my habitual reticence, but also by a new and overpowering shyness. And even then, while filled with pity for her, came a cablegram from my mother. My father was dead. Drowned in the sea that had been his throughout so much of his life! The little yawl that had been his delight had been his undoing, for it had failed to weather a storm. And there was something menacing in the appeal my mother sent, urging me to come home immediately, if leave could be secured, as my father's "business affairs demanded attention."

Through the infinite courtesy of that great admiral who has since gone to his rest, there was but small delay in securing leave, and in just fifteen days from the receipt of the cablegram, I entered the home of which I knew so little, where my mother waited my coming. It was a very sad reunion, because it was as if she had lost all moorings of life now that my father, who had been to her shield, shelter, and tower of strength, was gone. He had left a will, but it had not been read, being held for my return. The lawyer, who brought it to the house on the evening I telephoned him, was a very elderly man, such as my father would naturally have selected, and insisted on reading it aloud. It was a very useless and trying ceremony. It left everything he had in the world to me, his only son, "Trusting in my son's honor, which is without smirch or stain, to provide for his mother and be to her all that I have tried to be, and to give to her all the love that I have given both him and her throughout all my life since I have known her, and she gave him to me."

There was a letter with the will that was directed to me. I did not read it then, but sat with her throughout the evening, both silent, and staring into the flames that leaped up the big open fireplace that had been my father's great joy. Here he, too, had sat in the years of his restless retirement, undemonstrative save that, I know, he always sat with his arm around her, even as I did on that bleak December night. I did not read the letter immediately when, after bidding her good-night, I retired to my room, but stood looking about me with a strange sensation of suddenly realizing all the love that silent man of the sea had bestowed upon me in his own way. This home had been his one great extravagance. He had fought for the woman who had been his beacon, his ideal. And, with hard common sense and harsh self-appraisement, he had gone to a distinguished architect, told him how much he had to spend on that home, given him a certified check for fifty thousand dollars and told him to plan and build. There had been but one proviso in his retainer and instructions (for of this I learned from the lips of the architect himself, years later), that one room should be fitted to suit a sailor; that it should overlook the sea, and be within sound of the perpetual waves; that it should be a room to which a wearied mariner, come to rest, might enter as a haven, and with downcast eyes, as if ashamed of sentiment, he had concluded: "For that room, sir, shall belong, always, to my son, and, if God is so kind, to his sons when all of us are gone."

I switched off the lights and for a long time stood by the window, looking from the grateful warmth of modern heat out over the tops of the pine trees and the lawn, all snow-clad and white, toward the sea that now glittered under the cold winter moon. Thus, I doubted not, had my father stood, sometimes, thinking of the happiness he had planned for me when I, too, retired. And somehow, that night, I felt his presence in the room, and turned with a great yearning to speak to him. Ah, if it had been

possible, on that night I should have been eloquent with all the unbounded memories of his wordless kindness, forgetting that it had ever been his way to hold me aloof.

Here, too, there was an ample grate and a glowing fire, rendering the elaborate heating system but a superfluity. I drew the shades and the hangings, and, by firelight alone, read his letter:

To my boy, Tom (if ever this is read by you, which it may not be, inasmuch as the sea, or the intervention of God, may prohibit): You may have thought that, due to a very grievous failing of mine, I have never given you a father's affection, a father's caress, or a father's companionship. All of which I regret, for since that day when I first saw you, a tiny babe aboard the first ship I ever owned, the old *Esperanza*, you have been — always giving place to the great light of my life, your mother — the one being for whom I fought and strove. My limitations will have been defined, and all that I have done, and all in which I have failed, will have been totaled if this ever reaches your eyes. Suffice it that there have been but two beings in this world for whom I have done the best I could — my very utmost — your mother and you. I put you into the United States Navy because I am, first of all, an American, and believe that, next to the fealty due God Himself, there comes none other equal to that which a man owes his country. Also, I wished you to be a gentleman of the Navy, for no blackguard can therein survive. This letter will never be given you if you fail. It will not be put into your hands if I survive the woman who has been to me, regardless of all others, the greatest woman that God ever gave to man, your mother. It will not be read by you unless the will I have made has been read. One is a legal document; but this letter will be a codicil from the very heart of one who, though dumb in speech, and incapable in lavishment of outward caress, has loved you as no other man ever will. It is my last and sole request, and is based upon the following urgent reason: Your mother will need companionship from you, *and you must give it!*

I therefore ask, that, if you are not indispensable to the service of your country, you shall resign and place yourself at her disposal, to comfort her last years, as I have tried to do.

You will not, perhaps, be a rich man, as I had hoped, because

times have changed, and steam has superseded us of the old school who trusted to fair winds, free sails, and a clean reputation for our profit. You have my consent to go into steam; but I wish you would, for the sake of one who loves you, your father, cling to the old name; for it has been dear to me because you were born aboard the *Esperanza*. You have been a good, obedient, and worthy son, of whom I am very proud. Reports for which I arranged have proven it; for there has never been a week when you were away from me that I did not have such report. May God bless you and prosper you, and make of you a strong staff to comfort your mother, for whom I shall wait with such patience as may be given in the Great and Last Port.

It was very dim in the room when I finished reading. The flames of the fire scintillated into innumerable broken flashes, through my tears, and I was glad that I was alone where none might observe my lack of repression. For an hour I sat bidding an unfaltering good-bye to the service that I had loved, and all the dreams that had arisen from it; but my hand did not falter when, after turning on the lights, I wrote my resignation from the United States Navy. The least I could give to that strange, silent, unemotional man, whose pride had held him aloof, but whose love had followed me from the hour of my birth, was obedience to his last request.

CHAPTER III

NO individual is indispensable to a nation, regardless of his greatness or his smallness. The great Lincoln, of whose tragic death no real American may think without a sudden tremor of veneration and pity, left but a momentary gap when his life's work was ended. How little, then, mattered the loss of the services of Thomas Hale, a mere lieutenant-commander aboard one of America's many ships? But I still cherish, with much pride, some of the letters I received from superiors and brother officers! Each individual, be he ever so humble,

must have something of which to be proud if he has been at all a man!

I had not appreciated to the full my father's harassments until that day I presented myself in the offices of the Esperanza Sailing Company, to learn the exact financial status upon which my mother and I must depend. His letter, written some years previous, had foreseen difficulties that were to be brought about by steam, although he, old-fashioned if you will, clung to sail. Moreover, I learned that first day that in the years intervening between the writing of the letter and my advent into the company's affairs, my father had sold, bit by bit, shares of stock until I was now but a third owner in the corporation. Worst of all, it had been sold to old friends of his, retired mariners, who were fighting the last fight between sail and steam from sentiment alone and regardless of gain. I was made president and general manager of the Esperanza Sailing Company, and fell to work to try to retrieve its fallen fortunes.

It is very useless to detail the struggles and trials that nearly overwhelmed me in the two most miserable years of my life that followed. I derived such comfort as I could from correspondence and sometimes visits with Marty Sterritt, until I read a paragraph in a Boston newspaper announcing her betrothal to Count Waldo von Vennemann.

She was at the time abroad.

I had cherished the ambition to marry her, if possible, whenever I could come to her with my affairs in better condition; I had come to believe that she loved me; I had almost conceived it to be a wordless understanding between us, and — I loved her as none but a man of mature years, who has kept his own moral life clean, can love. Her last letter lay before me, and was almost intimate. I saw, of a sudden, that I had been a fool, reading between lines phrases that were not there, building dreams that were but dreams, and painting pictures with colors of hope rather than reality. I wrote her a letter that was

intended to conceal my wound, and convey the impression that no air castle of mine had been toppled by the news. I congratulated her and wished her much happiness. I directed it to her latest address in the German health resort where she was ministering to the comfort of her stricken father, and with my own hands posted it.

And on that evening, returning home with this sickening sense of irrevocable defeat, I came to meet another loss. The chauffeur and man-of-all-work who met me at the station told me that but half an hour previously my mother had been stricken ill, and that even then the doctor was in attendance. I took the wheel myself, and forgetting speed laws and all else, drove madly from the station.

Thank God I did; for I was in time to hear her last words and pillow her in my arms, as with a smile of ineffable happiness she went to meet the waiting one beyond sight. At the very last she lifted her arms and called my father's name, and then lay very still. That she, foreseeing dissolution, had patted my cheek with her frail and trembling hand and whispered that she had naught but a happy tale to carry across the border-land, did not lessen my grief; for now I was alone. I was the sole survivor of that *Esperanza* that had fought its fight in the tropical hurricane.

And when I awoke from the dumb lethargy of grief, more than a week later, I learned that war had been declared in Europe, which was to try the souls of men more than they had ever been tried before.

To forget my own woes, I plunged into business affairs more strenuously than ever, and there was need; for the affairs of the *Esperanza* Sailing Company were daily growing more difficult. I foresaw that we must at once go into steam vessels in a time when speed would be the paramount consideration. But I was fighting the one thing that knows neither reason nor argument,—sentiment!

For one whole year I strove to overcome the stubbornness of those ancient mariners who constituted my board

of directors, urging that we transform as rapidly as possible to steam vessels, myself urging the purchase of numerous small steamships of freighter class and that alone. I might as well have attacked a stone pier with a palm needle. That we could not pay dividends and must confine ourselves to a mere coasting trade, small and unprofitable, did not alter their minds. At the next annual election I was removed, not only from the presidency, but also from the management of the line that my father had established.

I think that for at least a six-months I sulked, living in the meantime at my lonely home, driving my car hither and yon, devoting my water hours to a yawl that I had bought, and cruising along the coast. And then I applied to the United States Navy for reinstatement. It was useless at the time, for now a new régime had entered that hoped to decrease rather than increase the Navy, in the fervent trust that our country could sheer clear of the shoals, and that after the conclusion of the European war no man could possibly live to know another conflict.

It was sheer inaction and opportunity that changed my whole course and aroused me from sloth. I was offered seventy-five thousand dollars for my holdings in the Esperanza Sailing Company, by a man who was fighting for control. Pessimistic as to its future, I seized the chance, and sold. And on the day the check was received and recognized as a deposit, I began to haunt the water-fronts. The Navy would not have me, but I was going to sea again, on a vessel of my own, and lay the foundations for a new Esperanza line. And that I should not be combated for the name I was convinced, being quite certain that within a year the old line, with its ancient mariners, would be dead and gone.

The price of steamships had advanced enormously. Had the old Esperanza line turned to steam before the beginning of the war, I should now have been an independently wealthy man. Ships that in the month preceding

the outbreak could have been bought for thirty dollars a ton now readily brought two hundred a ton, so that my total fortune did not give me the ownership of an ocean liner, by any means. Although, to her credit, I must say that, considering the times, I made a good bargain when I bought that lazy but commodious old tramp, the *Golden West*. She was slow, but her engines were good, and her hull was something better than a solid scale of rust with a cement bottom, such as were many of the craft dragged out from ship boneyards after years of idleness and sent forth to sea, wheezing and trembling, like palsied old men. Ah, many of them left port in those strenuous days never to return. I promptly renamed her the *Esperanza*.

I was out to take chances, and strange chances I took! . For by unheard-of pay I succeeded in gathering together a crew, all American, that would jauntily have sailed her over the edge of a flat world without qualm or whimper; but of these, as Fate would have it, by far the most peculiar, and the most valuable, as time proved, was the man who signed on as chief engineer, "Twisted Jimmy" Martin. And most aptly was he named, for a more irascible, gruff, unsociable, violent-tempered man never entered an engine-room; which is certainly giving him a character for those who know how heat is inclined to sour the tempers of many such of that calling. Jimmy Martin I had met years before, when our Government was testing some new submarines. He was the expert for one of the big companies and it fell to my lot to come in contact with him many times when taking over such boats. His capability was admitted, for he was no ordinary man; but he had never been known to hold any berth overly long, and was almost invariably fired for insolence to superiors, an insolence that sometimes went as far as personal violence, for his strength was as a gorilla's, and his pugnacity notorious. Moreover, he was a self-made scientist, and had been discharged from two submarine concerns for conducting experiments on his own responsibility without any permission whatever

from his employers. His sole passion was for inventing different appliances, nearly all of which proved worthless, or were stolen from him. He had been derided and ridiculed until he had gained a thorough contempt for the intelligence of other men, robbed until he doubted most men's honesty, and feared to talk lest some one should pirate his ideas; but we had become fairly acquainted, although for more than a year I had lost touch with him.

I had some difficulty in getting such a man as I wanted for chief engineer of the *Esperanza*, for good men were scarce. A labor exchange agent had just told me he could not furnish me with any man he could wholly recommend, and I was turning out of the office when he said, "By the way, there is one man who is a crack, but a crank, that is on my list. If you can't do better—But I can't say much for him. Bad-tempered old devil. Twisted Jimmy Martin, they call him."

"Why, I know him!" I exclaimed. "How does he happen to be on the beach?"

"Same old trouble. And the worst of it is, he won't take most of the places I've got him, because he makes such ridiculous terms."

"What does he want?"

"I'll be blest if I know. Like to talk to him? By the way, there he comes now. Just in time."

It took me but five minutes to learn that my friend Jimmy Martin would like to see the *Esperanza* before he would sign on, and I took him to her berth and conducted him over her. For some reason that was like intuition, I desired to have him, believing that he was not as bad as his reputation, and that, in any case, I could get along with him. And then came his most singular stipulation. It was that he should have a cabin on the deck, which no one, not even a steward, was to be allowed to enter.

"You can have two cabins, if you like," I said, knowing

that there would be at least three unoccupied ones. He positively beamed.

"Then, if you'll do that, Captain Hale, I'm your man, and I'll not quarrel about the screw. Stick in your own figures."

I gave an order then and there to carpenters who were making some alterations for me, to cut and fit a door in a partition, thus turning two cabins into one. Twisted Jimmy seemed abashed by so much consideration. I made up my mind to go the limit, foreseeing that if I could win him over to a real friendship I would have the prize of engineers.

"Now, if you wish," I added, "I'll have the berths taken out of that extra cabin and fit it up as you say. I'm the owner."

"Do you mean it?" he growled, eying me almost with suspicion.

"Certainly I do," I confirmed. "I've known you a long time. I don't believe you're as rotten hard to get along with as you're painted. I'm going to do as I please aboard my own ship, and it's all to my good to make you so comfortable that you'll stand by."

He stood for some time looking over toward the bay, and then abruptly questioned, "You're old Tom Hale's son? Him that men used to call 'Honest Tom'?"

I nodded.

"I knew him well," he said. "And I'll trust any of that breed till hell freezes over. Yes, you can do something more for me. I'd like that cabin stripped, and a bench built along this side here. Then I'd like some shelves with racks on this side. If I'm asking too much, you can take the cost out of my pay."

"I'll do nothing of the latter sort," I declared. "I'll stand for it myself. All I ask you, Jimmy Martin, is to curb your temper as much as you can and run my engines. What you want that extra cabin for is none of my business, and you shall not be disturbed in it. It is yours."

He did not even thank me, but turned on his heel and walked away.

"I'll be up at that shark's office to sign on at four o'clock," he called over his shoulder, without so much as looking back, and he was as good as his word. Moreover, he was aboard before the ship was ready to go into commission, and himself went over the engines until they were as perfect as human skill could make them.

I said that I took chances. My first cargo was one of high explosives for a certain one of the Allies, and we cleared port without a penny of insurance, but under a freight rate that was so high I blush to tell the figures. Nor did we stop at that; for we made several such passages, constantly holding our lives in our hands, and earned some reputation for being adroit by the manner in which we avoided, on two occasions, German submarines. Within a short time, the *Esperanza* had paid for herself, even after deducting prize money that I distributed among the members of my crew, who began to look upon me as a sort of fairy godfather. And in a whole year I had got but little closer to Jimmy. He was the only man aboard who seemed incapable of favoring me with a smile or a word of thanks. Even the men had learned to leave him severely alone, prompted, I think, in several cases, by his quickness of fists. It was more than a year before I discovered the use of that mysterious cabin wherein he buried himself whenever off watch, and then in rather a startling manner.

Let no one think that the carrying of a cargo of high explosives across the Atlantic and into the danger zone was without anxieties. It had been my rule to do as little work as possible until mid-ocean was reached, thereby resting myself for the last strain, during which time I was frequently on the bridge for forty-eight hours at a stretch. There was the certain knowledge that we were carrying contraband, that most likely this was fully known to the German Government, and that, as my chief

mate said, if we were hit, we "would n't go down at all, but straight up!" We made it a rule to travel without a ray of light showing. Hence I think I may be pardoned for being somewhat alarmed on that very dark night when, coming along the starboard side and abaft Jimmy's cabin, I was suddenly half blinded by a flash of light through screens and blinds. I fairly leaped to one side, with my hands clutched over my burning eyes, but in that single flash I recognized something so weird, so unusual in the quality of the light, that it presented more the appearance of a writhing bar of spectral, boiling flame in an infinite variety of color. Terrified, I ran to his cabin door and battered on it with my hands. The light had disappeared and all was blackness. I got no response, but fancied I heard him moving within his outer cabin, so called, "Martin! Martin! Jimmy! Are you hurt?"

The door suddenly flung open so sharply as almost to knock me over, and a snarling, angry form jumped through. In the little light there was I discerned that his fists were shut and his arms tensed to strike.

"Hold fast!" I shouted. "What's the matter with you, man?"

"Oh, it's the skipper," I heard him say, as if to himself.

"Yes, it is," I retorted; and then demanded, somewhat harshly, "What is the meaning of that flash-light from your back cabin window? I thought the ship was afire, or that you were signaling to some one."

To my utter surprise, he fairly sprang forward and did the most remarkable act — caught both my arms in his hands, that clenched my muscles with his fingers, and thrust his face toward mine.

"Flash-light? From my back cabin window? You saw a light?"

His voice was hoarse with excitement, as he fairly shot his questions at me; but now, as I tried to shake myself loose, fearing that he had gone insane, and that I should be compelled to defend myself until I could call

for help to subdue him, his voice abruptly changed to one of appeal. "Tell me, Hale, please tell me, are you quite certain? Certain that you saw a light?"

"See here," I said, "either you or I have gone mad! Control yourself, can't you? What does this nonsense mean? Of course I saw a light. So could any German sub have seen it if it had been five miles away. Do you mean to tell me you know nothing about it?"

And I had a right to feel anger, I think, considering the risks that we incurred there in mid-ocean, with a ship solidly loaded with the most deadly explosives man had ever utilized, and with a price on our heads.

"My God! I've got it! Got it!" he cried, suddenly wilting back against the door-frame, and then sinking down to a half-sitting posture, as if his knees had given way through weakness.

"Come, come! This won't do, Martin," I said, in a much more kindly tone, for now I regarded him as being hopelessly insane, or on the verge of collapse. "Here! Let me get my arm under you and help you to your bunk. You're ill, and I can't afford to have anything happen to you. I thought I was the only man aboard this boat who had nerves. It's enough, Jimmy, to give any man the jumps! Come on. Let me help you. I've some brandy in my cabin, and maybe a pull at that will set you straight."

I bent over to assist him, but he half pushed me away, gently, as if to assure me that he had no intention of being rude, and straightened himself until he stood erect. He barred his arms across the door to prevent my entering his precincts, and stammered, "Please, sir! Please! Let me — let me come to your cabin for the brandy. I'm — I'm a bit upset. I've reasons for — for — But there'll be no more light shine through. I promise."

"All right. Come on over to my cabin," I said, half soothingly, thinking that his paroxysm was subsiding, but intent on satisfying myself that there had been

nothing sinister in what I had seen. I turned from him and walked cautiously away, to make sure that no one but myself had witnessed that singular menace, and was relieved when convinced that no one had; for men living under the constant strain in which we labored are touchy. A mere whisper that Twisted Jimmy Martin was playing with the enemy, and not even I could have saved him from being hurled overboard.

He came from the darkness into my brilliantly lighted cabin, jerked the door shut behind him, and stood, blinking and confused. He ran a hand across his forehead, and left thereon a broad smear of livid green as from some chemical with which his fingers had been smeared. His eyes glowed and burned beneath his overhanging gray eyebrows, as he stared at me for an instant, and then seemed to gaze still farther at something beyond my sight.

"Old honest Tom Hale's son!" he said, in a barely audible mutter, and then, after an instant's pause, and still in self-communion, — "and the breed is honest, and would n't rob any man on earth!"

There was something so strange in his demeanor that I took refuge in the time necessary to open a locker and pour him the brandy, before questioning him. I thrust a chair toward him, into which he sank before gulping the stimulant. It appeared to pacify him. Before I had time to ask him a question he lifted his eyes, that had been staring with that same absorption at the floor, and met mine.

"Captain Tom Hale," he said, in a voice softer than I had ever heard him use, "you have been very decent to me. I trust you more than any man I have met in the last twenty years. You've trusted me, and trust wins trust. I'm going to ask you to trust me some more. It's about that light you saw."

He looked at me questioningly.

"Jimmy Martin," I said, with a swift and unaccountable faith that he was at least very honest, "you can

trust me, and I'm going to trust you; but I do want to say that you put us in pretty big danger. One never can tell who is watching, in times like these. You know that. And I think you know that there are a lot of men looking for the *Esperanza*, all the time. You got that second cabin to use as a laboratory."

"Yes, I did," he admitted. "And you have played the game with me. Fair and square! You kept me from being interfered with or annoyed. I heard you tell the mate to see that nobody so much as loafed around my quarters. You said that my business was my own, and nobody's else. In the year and three months that I've been aboard this ship, you never allowed any man to so much as knock on the door. Well, I've had my way, and been unmolested for the first time in my life. To-night I made the first real step in something I've been working on for twenty years, and if it had n't been for you, I'd never have known it. I did n't know that I had it. You helped me without knowing it. And — I've got something revolutionary. I've got —"

I held up my hand to check him.

"See here," I said, "I don't wish you to think that I am out to learn anything at all of what you are working upon. That is your affair. You need n't tell me anything concerning it. I'll not take advantage of my position as owner and captain of this ship to compel you to confidence. All I say is that you and I both know the risks of displaying at sea, just now, a beam of light like that."

He continued to stare at me for a long time, and then questioned, dryly, "Suppose I told you that the — er — thing I have invented might make any man who has it a millionaire?"

"Then I should say to you, Jim Martin, 'I hope you make a million out of it.' I never yet begrudged or envied a man who has gained something by his own brains or work!"

"And you would n't want to get in on it?" he demanded, as if astonished.

"Certainly not by any unfair means. That's what it would amount to if I took advantage of your and my positions aboard this ship."

"And you don't intend to hinder me, or even ask me what it is?" he asked incredulously, his heavy eyebrows lifting, and his eyes snapping open and shut.

"Not at all! All I ask is that you don't put us all in danger."

"I'd like to shake hands with you," he said, getting to his feet with an air of relief. "I've had an experience that has n't made me think very much of my fellow men, as a whole; but I think I know a square man when I see him, and — somehow it makes me feel considerable better about life in general. The light will not be seen again. Good-night, sir."

And before I could say any more he jerked the door open, slammed it shut again, and was gone. I did not then in the least appreciate that Opportunity had been paying me a visit, unsuspected and unsought, and that Twisted Jimmy was her agent. Nor, to be cleanly frank, did I have any great belief in his invention, whatever it was, because the hard, matter-of-fact world is inclined to scoff at those strange beings who have found "something revolutionary"!

CHAPTER IV

THE Esperanza made but two more round trips across the Atlantic after that night when the mysterious light shone from Jimmy's cabin, and then, with frayed nerves, but with a larger bank account than I had believed it possible for me to acquire in so short a space of time, I declined another cargo of explosives, and took on a miscellaneous load for Maracaibo. It paid ridiculously low

rates in comparison with what I had been receiving, but I was intent on taking a rest myself and giving a vacation from war perils to my crew.

It was while we were taking on the first of the cargo that Jimmy, who, since that night of the discovery of the light, had thawed considerably in his attitude toward me, came to my cabin, in which I usually stopped when in harbor, and after smoking a most evil pipe for a few minutes, said he very much desired to have me dine with him that evening. I think if he had invited me to accompany him on a trip to the moon I should not have been much more astonished; but, not wishing to appear churlish and having nothing else to do, I accepted.

"No fancy place, Captain," he said, as if fearing that I would don evening clothes. "Just a quiet little place I know, where we can talk. Shall I come up about seven o'clock?"

I told him "Yes," and accordingly that night he conducted me to about the last sort of a restaurant I should ever have thought him to frequent, and where he seemed rather well known. It was in a basement, and seemed to be patronized by a strange medley of men, among whom I recognized a few faces. There were two great inventors, a professor of physics in a college where I had once visited, and a wild-eyed theorist on universal brotherhood I had last heard addressing a crowd in Union Square.

Twisted Jimmy made his way to a small table in one corner, stopping now and then to speak to some of his friends, and the waiter who turned our chairs back addressed him as "Chief," a further evidence that he was a familiar. We were served a most excellent meal, and Twisted Jimmy treated me to another surprise by proving himself a most agreeable conversationalist. He seemed to have a pretty broad knowledge of everything, including music, art, and philosophy. I commented on this, saying that he was more like another man than the chief engineer of the *Esperanza*, at which he laughed quietly,

and said, "Perhaps! Perhaps! But all this is by way of recreation and — relief. You see, you've never quite understood the situation. In one way I have — rather used you. Sometimes I should have felt somewhat sneaking, were it not that I have been a good engineer, and, I hope, given you full value in service."

"You have, Jimmy! You have!" I assured him, and I thought he looked at me rather kindly, as if gratified.

"Well," he said, leaning farther across the table that had now been cleared save for the small cups of black coffee, "I brought you here to-night particularly to explain myself, as well as for the pleasure of your company. I had a laboratory here in New York where I worked, until my money was exhausted, on certain experiments of which I have made a life study. It was just when I was nearly at the end of my finances that I learned that I was being watched, for — I may as well be frank — the success of my invention would have been a most valuable asset in war. Four different times in my life I have been robbed. Once by a babbling friend who introduced a man who came solely to steal my ideas, once by the secret agent for a certain foreign government, who entered my rooms like a burglar with a skeleton key, once by a firm for which I worked and to which I lost a lawsuit for a patent on the ground that I had perfected it on the firm's time and with the firm's money, and once by a patent agent whose work was faulty."

He paused, and for a moment scowled savagely into space, and then appeared to shake himself back to the present and to my companionship.

"When I discovered that again a man was waiting for me to achieve success and then to steal my invention, I did not know which way to turn. I had not sufficient money to disappear, cover my tracks, and start a new laboratory in some place well removed from New York. It was then the idea came to me that the safest place of all, could I but find it, was a suitable ship, and a captain

and shipmates who would leave me unmolested. I had been off the sea for two years, but my reputation as a competent crank, given by men who did not in the least understand me, stood me in good stead. ‘Twisted Jimmy’! A nice sobriquet given by some thin-brained fool. ‘Twisted’? I’m not twisted; but I avoid and loathe the companionship of men who have no brains! I have deliberately made myself unsociable, and ugly, merely that I may be left alone and unmolested in my work. Captain Hale, I signed aboard your ship so that I could have a laboratory that would be secure, and could at the same time earn money enough to proceed with my experiments. I’ve worked like a dog in the time I’ve been with you, stealing every minute I could from rest and sleep to continue my experiments. I’ve not averaged more than five or six hours’ sleep out of each twenty-four, and when standing my trick at the engines have done that work mechanically, while my mind was active on my other problems. And I’ve watched you quietly, and have come to like and trust you as I do no other man living.”

He spoke with his eyes fixed straight on mine, and there was no mistaking his sincerity.

“It was nothing to me what you did, beyond my engines; but I am pleased that you —” I began.

“You did not take advantage of me as so many others would have done, on that night when you saw the light! I was ready to take you into my confidence; but with a gentleman’s instinct, you declined to listen unless such confidence was freely given. Well, you shall not, I hope, lose by it in the long run; but to-day has made a vital change in my plans. It is necessary for my work. I brought you here to explain myself this far, so you will not think that I am without reluctance leaving you in the lurch on the very eve of sailing. I shall not go with you again if you can find another engineer to take my place, for if I do go, it might be at the expense of my own life-work.”

Not until that moment had I fully realized how much I had come to depend upon him and his rare skill. It was like a disastrous blow to me and my plans. He read the effect of his words in my face, and saw that I was upset.

"See here," he blurted out, "if you can't get some one else, I'll go. You've been as white a man as ever I met."

"No, Jimmy," I declared, "that would n't be playing fair with a friend. I must do that, otherwise I'd be no friend. I'm just as sincere in wishing you to succeed as I am for my own success. I can get no one like you. You know that! I'd rather have you than any other man living, because I can and do trust you — all the way through. I go so far as to tell you that I've made myself a financial stepping-stone to do the things I intend to do, but that I'm in no hurry, and if you need money for what you are so in earnest about, I'll lend it to you so you can go ahead. That is my idea of friendship."

"You'd — you'd lend me money? To go ahead on something that you know nothing about? You would — My God! I didn't know there were such men!" he exclaimed, as if to himself, and amazed at his discovery. He suddenly put his big work-stained hand across the table, and caught mine in a grip that hurt.

"Tom," he said, and I forgave him the familiarity, "I wonder if you know how much you are like your father was! He was the only other man I have ever known who came to me when I was in distress and offered help. I was young then, and too proud to accept; but he gave me something better than money. He gave me encouragement, faith, and new bravery, by a mere pat on the back with his big, capable hand, even though he never learned how to talk. He did n't believe much in my inventiveness, but he did believe in me as a man. You never knew that before, I'm certain, because old Tom Hale never in his life told of the good things he did, and took no credit for kindness."

Actually I was embarrassed and afraid that the man known as "Twisted Jimmy," hard, irascible, aloof, was going to break with emotion now that he had confessed sentiment. I had not in the least suspected him capable of sentiment. I would as soon have expected a rugged, barren, granite peak to break into sudden flowery bloom. I had witnessed the thawing of an iceberg. With the same incomprehensible change that marked all his actions, he suddenly rapped out: "All right! That settles it! I'm not going to leave you and the *Esperanza* to the incompetent, ignorant clutches of some beach-combing, tub-swilling, fifth-rate engineer, that should have been a bottle-washer and pot-scourer behind some Bowery bar. I'm going to stick."

I think my mouth hung open for a moment. The man was, from his viewpoint at least, making a most magnificent sacrifice: giving up his own dreams; and the dreams of the individual, if he be worth while, are always great; throwing them aside to repay me for a little, insignificant kindness! I was rather stunned by it. I stammered something about not wishing to stand in the way of his progress and reiterated, stubbornly, that I would do anything I could to help him on his quest; that it was not just nor decent for one man to stand in another's way on a road that was hard enough at best.

"By Heavens!" he said, again as if to himself, and regarding me almost with curiosity, as if I were something abnormal to his vision, "I wonder how far you really would go!" And then, without looking at me, and aimlessly twirling the tiny coffee-cup by its fragile handle between his big rough fingers, said: "Suppose I were to say to you that you could help me more than any one else possibly could by letting me stay aboard the *Esperanza*, on condition that I be given the privilege of making her upper works a muck; that I could have — let me see — umh-m-m — two other cabins torn out and made into one would give — eighteen and nine makes twenty-

seven, and seven makes thirty-four, and — ” He fell to making figures on the tablecloth with the grimy stump of a pencil he pulled from his vest pocket, much to the distress of the waiter, who appeared and hovered in his rear. “Yes, I could make that do by reducing the orifice of the light on a regular scale, and — if I could get a test — Um-m-mh! Caribbean sea. No risk down there as yet. Quite unlike the Atlantic.”

Somehow I had become interested in his monologue. And, moreover, I wished to prove to one who had spoken so kindly of my taciturn father that I, too, could make sacrifices rather than mouth words for one who was making a hard struggle. He appeared almost surprised, as if unaware that he had spoken aloud, and believing that I had the gift of a mind-reader when I said: “Of course you can have the cabins! We’ll have the partitions ripped out to serve your needs, and you can have tests of whatever it is you wish to test, whenever it suits you and all things are convenient. The cabins are nothing. There have been four empty ones ever since I bought her. I’ll have a couple of carpenters aboard before noon tomorrow, and all you have to do is to tell them what you want done. It’s a little unusual; but that is the advantage of owning one’s own ship. I own the *Esperanza*, and think I can still do what I like with her. I’ll go no halfway in anything I start. And so that is all decided.”

For another spell he favored me with that odd look, and it was quite his normal characteristic to answer with a monosyllabic “Good.” I don’t think we spoke a half-dozen sentences after that, before parting for the night. All the way of my return to the docks, I meditated and sought to put myself in his position. Here was a man with an idea. It might never come to fulfillment after what I surmised had taken years of patient effort and much privation. Until it was a proven failure or a success, he would continue trying, and, after all, his mental happiness depended upon it. My father had known and es-

teemed him for his real worth, and any man of whom my father approved was good enough for me. I had prospered far more than I had dreamed possible, and, now that Marty Sterritt was hopelessly removed from my life, had no one of kin, nor many friends for whom I could be unselfish. I knew myself well enough to feel assured that another woman could never enter my life, at least under the shield of love, and that I could look forward to nothing save the selfish desires of accomplishment. Jim Martin, despite the liberal bonus he had received while in my employ, must be, by his own confession, a poor man, probably spending all he could rake and scrape on whatever thing this was upon which he was working, a veritable "child of his brain." It would cost me comparatively little to be of more assistance to him than I had promised, and somehow it gave me a feeling of warmth to come to a conclusion.

Early the next morning, before Jimmy had appeared, I increased the engine-room staff by another man named Klein, who came rather well recommended, and long before Jimmy arrived, three carpenters had ripped and torn away the partitions of the cabins he wished, with the sole exception of the one guarding his laboratory. I was called to the harbor master's office, and on my return found Jim superintending the alterations. He had resumed his ship air like an old garment, and bade me his usual "Good morning, sir," without an additional word. It was a full hour later when he rapped on my cabin door and came in with a troubled face. He cleared his throat as if to bend his vocal cords to their accustomed gruffness, and said, "There's a man out there with his kit, who says you signed him on for the engine-room. I don't quite understand it, after our talk of last night."

I motioned him to a chair, and shoved a box of cigars toward him, before answering.

"Jimmy," I said, "it means that I got to thinking it all over after I left you, and came to the conclusion that

I'd like to help you to win out. And I think it's pretty rough luck to have to work all day in an engine-room, and then work half the night afterward. I signed that man on as first engineer. He's got a chief's certificate and a clean record. And on this trip, at least, I'm going to see that you have more time for your own affair. With this additional man, you won't have to stand a trick. You are still the chief engineer of this boat, and what you say goes."

He didn't appear to like it.

"We are friends, are n't we? I'm certain that if I were in your place, and you in mine, you'd do as much for me — a little thing like this."

There I was, actually pleading with him to permit me to be of assistance, and I had to indulge myself in a chuckle!

"You don't mean to say that you're doing all this without expecting to stand in if I make good?" he demanded.

"The surest thing you know!" I declared. "I'm doing it because I like you, as my father before me liked you. And if you can pull it through — whatever it is — I shall be proud, all my life, of having given such a little boost."

Suddenly I was put in a most embarrassing situation, for this man with a reputation for harshness, this granite man, got to his feet, with curiously twisting lips, and I could see a big lump leaping up and down in his throat as he tried to speak. He actually croaked, and then, as a stammering man sometimes finds relief in expletives, swore steadily, and plunged for the door. When I came out awhile later, I was told that he had gone ashore. A truck arrived with a load of cases for him, and I saw, without trying to see, that they were labeled from one of the most distinguished firms of scientific-instrument makers in New York, and concluded, therefore, that he had not only decided to stay with the ship, but to plunge into his mysterious work.

I had not much further time to think of him and his

affairs before we sailed, because there were disturbing rumors in the air that the Central Powers of Europe had threatened to carry the submarine war to the western Atlantic, and I had had too much experience with dodging those clever harriers to relish taking chances with them in home waters. It was the general conclusion of the waterfront that there might be war between those same Central Powers of Europe and the United States, that had hitherto held aloof; but I had made calculations that I should be able to reach Maracaibo before such an outbreak occurred, if it did, and that, if it did not, as a ship of American registry, plying between neutral ports in the Western Hemisphere, I should not be more than slightly inconvenienced. But my hope for an uneventful, unworried cruise was suddenly smashed a trifle. No man can entirely avoid worry when there is real and active menace surrounding him.

We had been lying in the Atlantic Basin in Brooklyn, and on sailing day threw off the lines and backed out into the stream with as little fuss as is usual with mere tramps of the sea, on whose departure there is no waving of handkerchiefs and no tears from those behind. There were no others to say good-bye than three or four sailors' wives, or three or four sailors' sweethearts, on the dock. We bore slowly outward into the channel with the staid placidity of habit, and I was just about to congratulate myself that we were in the freeway where tugs and lighters might not annoy, when my steward came hurriedly up to me, and said, "Captain, there's a stowaway aboard, I think, sir."

"What makes you think so?" I asked, and he made an astonishing reply.

"Because I saw a man that was n't Mr. Martin, walk to Mr. Martin's cabin, take a key out of his pocket, unlock the door, and go inside."

"You saw a man — you must be dreaming."

"I'm not, sir," he stoutly insisted, "I saw him. He

walked across as if he owned the boat. He did n't even look about him, sir. Just took out a key and unlocked the door, went in, and locked it behind him. And he was a stranger, sir. I know, because I've been on the *Esperanza* ever since you had her, and know every man-jack aboard!"

I rang for slow speed and called to the engine-room. A strange voice came floating up the tube.

"Ask Mr. Martin to come to the tube," I said.

"He's not here, sir. He came in just before we cast off, and has n't been seen since," came the astonishing reply.

I sent the steward out to search for Jimmy, and held mere headway down the traffic lane until he returned.

"Mr. Martin, sir," he said, "cannot be found aboard the ship."

CHAPTER V

I SET the telegraph over to full-stop, and let the *Esperanza* float with the outgoing tide. I ran down to Martin's cabin, and rapped on the door. There was no response. I sent my steward for a master-key and felt the wards of the locks turn beneath my fingers, and tried to open the door that I had never entered since Martin, with his peculiar insistence on privacy, came aboard. It did not budge, and I surmised that it was bolted on the inside. I tried to thrust it inward with my shoulders, but it did not yield. I went to a window, and was tearing away the green shutters when the steward said, "A tug-boat, sir, is coming up astern and giving us a call."

I paused for a moment and looked at her. She was swathed in black smoke, as if in haste, and carried a bone in her teeth that bespoke her thrust. A man stood in the very peak of her bow who threw his arms up and down to attract attention. I hesitated for a full minute before I could recognize my chief engineer. It was Martin, all right, jumping up and down in his anxiety. The tug came

panting alongside before I made clear his wrathful face. He came up the Jacob's-ladder thrown over for his convenience.

"Are you old Tom Hale's son?" he demanded, as he stood before me with clenched fists. "I'd never have thought that such a man could have —"

"Steady! Steady!" I called. "Let's get at the bottom of this."

I have been told that there is command in my voice. I don't know as to that, but I do know that it made him pause.

"What I should like to know," I continued, "is why you are n't aboard at sailing hour, and why you were seen but a few minutes before we cast off. There's something wrong about this" — and as his face became blank, I added — "Jimmy!"

His hands fell to his sides and he stood as if transfixed. Then his eyes fell upon the blinds that I had been tearing away with my fingers, and he made a step toward his cabin.

"I got a note from you asking me to come to an agency in Second Avenue, and that you would n't sail until you got another man," he said. "You put at the bottom of it, 'Urgent. Come at once. It's important for your work.' See! Here's the note itself."

He thrust into my hands a sheet of the identical note-paper that, being somewhat prone to extravagance, I used aboard the ship. The handwriting was not mine, but how should he know my handwriting when, to my knowledge, he had never seen it?

"Don't stop for explanations!" I shouted. "They shall be made later! Come and help me to smash in the door of your cabin. There's a man in there. Here! You two men stand by that window there, and two more by the next, and by the next one for 'ard. If any one tries to climb through, get him!"

Jimmy seemed to understand and rushed after me as I returned to the door. Together we threw our entire weight

against it, and the inside bolt snapped at the second impact, and we stumbled inside. A man tried to escape past us, but my steward caught him around his knees and brought him flat to the deck. Before he could regain his feet both Jim and I were on top of him.

"Let me alone! Let me alone! I'll get off the ship," he cried, with a somewhat foreign accent, that was not without a quaver.

Jim jerked him to his feet, and then, as if remembering those sacred precincts of his, said to me, "Hold him! Hold him! Don't let him get away until I have a look."

I caught our prisoner on one side, and my steward, who is still my personal attendant, by the way, caught him by the other. We whirled the man around and I got my first good full view of his face. For a moment I was puzzled as to where I had seen him, and then recollection came with a rush. He was one of the men who had done the carpenter work in altering the cabins for Jimmy's new laboratory, and had acted so curiously that the dock carpenter, a fairly good friend of mine, had fired him off the job, and replaced him with another man, declaring, "That mut is tangled in his upper rigging."

Jimmy ran through his cabin door, was gone for a minute or so, while we stood panting and turning deaf ears to the whining implorations of the intruder, and then came back in a blaze of fury. He ran his hands over the man's clothes, then tore open his coat, as if to take it from the man's body. He ran his hands into the pockets, and pulled out some papers, which he threw on the deck in disgust. He finally jerked the coat loose with one great rip that broke its back away, and then we saw, on the squirming back of our captive, a pocket in the very back of his vest between his shoulder-blades, from which projected a thin line of white. Jimmy gave an exultant shout and dragged these papers forth. He opened them to make his assurance complete, and I saw that traced on them were plans of a mechanism.

"Stand by there a minute!" Jimmy shouted over the rails to the skipper of the tug-boat; then, to me, "Bring him into my cabin till we go through him."

The steward and I obeyed. Inside that cabin we stripped the man, while Jimmy ransacked his clothing and held the few papers of which he possessed himself.

"He can get his togs back on," the chief said, with a grin.

We stood aside while the man, sullen and glowering, donned his clothing.

"Now we'll chuck him over on to the tug," said the chief.

We led our prisoner back out and told the tug's skipper that we had a man who wished to return to the dock, then somewhat roughly assisted our captive to her deck. Jimmy paid the tug for putting him aboard the *Esperanza*, and again we forged down the stream. I had no further chance to talk to him until late that night.

"That affair to-day proves how lucky it was that I remained on the ship to finish my work. I put it down as another score on my obligations to you," he said quietly.

"What do you make of it?" I asked. "Do you have any idea who that chap was?"

"Idea? I know!" was his emphatic assertion. "He was actually sent as a picked secret service agent from Central Europe to either buy or steal those plans. I was approached by three different men while we were in New York this time, all representing this same Government, I am certain. The first admitted it, and thus put me on my guard. The second I told very plainly that I would not offer or sell to any one until my own country had a chance at it, — and particularly because our own country seems to stand at this moment on the verge of war. That chap went away and returned with a man who came after dark, and of whose identity I was unaware until to-day, when I saw his picture in every newspaper that came to hand."

"The ambassador himself?" I exclaimed.

"None other! I'm dead positive. He did n't know how far I had progressed in my research, but had an astonishing knowledge of what I was attempting. And that is n't all; for he knew that I was intending to continue aboard the *Esperanza*, and that she was being altered to fit my needs."

"You know how that was discovered, don't you?" I asked, and told him of my recognition of the carpenter; but Jimmy had been so absorbed in his own affairs that he had not even noticed the men who did the work.

"Maybe it would have been wiser to keep him aboard," I said thoughtfully.

"I thought of that, but decided it would n't," Jimmy said. "I'd have had no peace of mind, and I'm right at a point where I can't carry any outside worry. But we shall have to keep a pretty close watch in Maracaibo, where probably some other spy will be waiting on the dock when we throw the first line."

Nodding sagely, he got to his feet, yawned, and stretched, and bade me good-night. Evidently he still desired to keep his own secret, although by this time I confess I had begun to experience a lively curiosity concerning it. I had rather tolerantly accepted his first statements that he was being watched, and taken the whole dose with a grain of salt, believing that one who suspects all men and everything about him might make a mountain out of a mere mole-hill; but that day had brought irrefutable proof that his work was actually of sufficient importance to cause a foreign government to go to the utmost extremes for its possession.

For three days we steamed steadily southward in most favorable weather, and, to my secret delight, Twisted Jimmy found ample time to devote to his private experiments, although I observed that he had not in the least increased his time for rest and sleep. I remonstrated with him in the utmost good-humor. His eyes glowed somberly, and, although we were alone, he looked furtively about him and leaned forward to whisper in my ear: "I can't rest

now, because the end is in sight! I've almost got it! Work and patience will turn the trick."

We paced to and fro along the deck in the moonlight, and finally halted by the door of his den. He was in the midst of an inconsequential sentence when he broke off abruptly, stared at the door which reflected the light from its shining white panels, and again glanced all about, as if seeking some eavesdropper. To my utter astonishment he unlocked the door, switched on the light, and said, "Come in and have a pipe, Captain. Come in!"

It was the first time he had ever given such an invitation since we had become shipmates. It was the first time I had ever stepped over that threshold since he came aboard the *Esperanza* with his stipulation for complete privacy. Quite deliberately he closed the door behind me, reassured himself that the shades were closed, and turned toward me with a grim face. He examined every foot of the cabin and then said, "Sit still a moment while I—" He did not complete the sentence, but unlocked the door leading back into his laboratory, and there, also, switched on the light. I saw nothing but a long space entirely lined from walls to ceiling and floor with black cloth. Even the doors and windows had been sealed. From where I sat nothing was visible in this funereal setting other than a grotesque, intricate machine of polished brass, whose use I could not conjecture. I heard him moving restlessly beyond my sight, opening drawers, and then came the clinking of glass, sounding as if he had removed one test tube after another from a rack and inspected each one in turn. He came swinging out against the black background and for a long time critically examined the brass apparatus, seeming to study its polished surfaces as if to discover whether a hand had been laid thereon. As if reassured, he returned to the light, switched it out, came through into his cabin, locked the connecting door with the utmost care, and came close to where I was sitting.

"Listen," he said, in a half-mumbled undertone.

“While I was out of here to-night some one tried to enter. There was a smear of grease or coal-dust where a man’s finger had tried to turn the knob. As a precaution I have kept all the woodwork surrounding the knob and keyhole spotlessly white.”

“No!” I exclaimed incredulously. “Are you positive?”

“Wait a moment,” he answered, and again went to his laboratory, where a much stronger light than the one in the ceiling became apparent, and then I heard him chuckle.

“Come in here,” he called, and I went into a room along one whole side of which were drawers and a bench covered with retorts and tubes, a huge machine with a small dynamo, and a rather odd equipment of polishing and grinding apparatus, such as might be seen in the workshop of a diamond-cutter. He was standing under a powerful light that shone downward, and now extended me a heavy magnifying-glass and a door-key.

“That is the key to the lock out there,” he said. “Have a look. Somebody took an impression of it — not with soap, mind you, but with specially prepared wax, such as locksmiths use.”

Under the glass it showed quite plainly.

“Which means,” he added, “that whoever took that impression came aboard this ship prepared for the work; because otherwise he could not have obtained this wax aboard the ship, and could not have made it aboard the ship. Get me?”

I was as angry as if I were his partner in enterprise. A sneak thief aboard my own ship! The thought was not comforting.

“Then who in the deuce — Say! It must have been a man from either the engine-room, a fireman, or a coal-passenger, because it’s not likely that any other hand would have left the smear.”

“Quite true,” he said quietly, and for an instant we

eyed each other with the same thought in our minds. We had but one new man aboard, the engineer, John Klein. Truly it was a German name, but the man had himself told me that he was of American birth.

"That man is far too good an engineer to be aboard this packet, it seemed to me the first day I saw him work," Jimmy muttered, as if one of us had spoken Klein's name aloud. He turned to a drawer and drew from it a square of cloth of peculiar texture, that I surmised was of the material that analytical chemists use. He led the way out of the laboratory and turned off the light. He also turned off the light in the front cabin and whispered his instructions:

"The door swings pretty well back. When I open it you stand just outside it, so as to conceal what I am doing, while I take that smudge off the door. We'll find out whether it is grease, or contains coal-dust. I'll let you know to-morrow morning."

So I stepped out into the moonlight, and talked as if concluding a conversation about our cargo, looking the meanwhile to see if I could discover any lurking form. I did not; nor did I find any one after bidding Jim good-night and hearing the door close behind me. I paced forward, and then aft, staring up at the single big funnel that poured a heavy, writhing column of smoke over its rim to float slowly away as we ran from under it in the calm night. The ship was on such a steady keel that the wireless kite did not sway as it stretched between the two graceful masts. Her deck shone clean and white, and her paintwork glistened in the moonlight, for my old naval habit of keeping everything spick and span could not be overcome, although it proved an expensive luxury. With almost naval discipline and regularity, I could see the bridge officer pacing steadily from wing to wing as if for exercise. Through her ventilators and the open grate amidships, the cheerful sounds of engines that ran sweetly and the clang of the furnace doors came upward, a chorus

that had always filled me with delight, like the infinite, familiar, small sounds of home. And yet, on that night, the *Esperanza* conveyed to me a sense of something foreign and distasteful, now that I knew she had a traitor aboard. We had been a "happy ship"; but now I felt that she was defiled. If I could have been certain of the traitor's identity I am not certain that I should not have been capable, on that night, of throwing him overboard with my own hands.

I slept uneasily in my cabin, which was abaft the chart-house and the bridge, and which I had most extravagantly made into a home more worthy of the captain of a luxurious liner than a mere freighter's skipper; for in my quick prosperity money had been very easy, and — I am somewhat luxurious in my taste and like physical comfort and decent surroundings.

Twisted Jimmy called me before my steward had arrived and I was not annoyed that he had disturbed me, because it was a final evidence that I had won his innermost liking. He actually sat on the edge of my bed — for a bed I had — and said, as if we had parted not more than ten minutes preceding: "Well, Tom, it's grease; no coal-dust in it at all. And what is more, Klein himself, at nine o'clock last night, readjusted some oil cups on the main dynamo after cussing out the oiler in charge. He wiped his hands on a piece of waste, said he felt rather out of gear, climbed up over the gratings, and went on deck. He was gone from the engines for about a half-hour, and came back in a rotten temper, and told the third that the engine-room looked like an Irish pigsty, and that if he could have his way he'd go through some of them down there with his boot. And I know the reason for that, I think! I changed the lock on my cabin door with my own hands, after that affair in the Atlantic Basin, because it does n't do to take too many chances on an old lock!"

CHAPTER VI

“WELL,” I said; “that seems to settle it! We’ll lose that bucko at Samaña, in Santo Domingo, where I’ve got to touch. I suppose you know I’m taking the Mona Passage?”

He appeared to consider for a long time, with his broad chin resting on the backs of his broad fists, and staring vacantly into the outer cabin.

“I think it’s Klein all right,” he said; “but I’d like to be certain of it. One time I lost a billet, when I was younger than I am now by a whole lot, because I was blamed for something I did n’t do. It caused me to change my rule. Before that I’d believed every man innocent till he was proven guilty. After that I thought all men guilty until they were proven innocent. But since I’ve got acquainted with you, I’m sort of wavering again, and wondering if I’m right in that rule of mine.”

“What do you intend to do about it?” I asked, as I slipped my feet into my slippers. “Are you going again to change the lock on your cabin door? Why not substitute the one I have on my door? It is a Yale.”

“No,” he said, lifting his huge bulk to his feet, and walking across to the window, through which he stared out at the placid morning sea as he talked. “It’s just because I’m going to try hereafter not to condemn any unknown man until I’ve got him really convicted, that I’m not going to do what you suggest.” He stood for a moment more and turned around to face me where I leaned on an elbow on the top of my cabin dresser. “You see, I’ve concluded that I have taken the wrong track, because I was unjustly condemned. Hereafter I’ve got to be sure. I’ve got a plan up my sleeve, if I’m not asking too much of you, that ought to settle it.”

He spoke the last as if reluctant to prey further upon my good-nature; quite like a man who was finding it difficult

to break through the hard shell of a reserve that he had fostered to growth about himself, and that had become so indurated as to cut him off from all the outer world in which he lived and struggled, shell-encased, among his fellow men. The look he turned upon me, there in the sunlit cabin, was questioning; quite as if he were a child venturing upon questionable and unknown ground.

"There's a way by which we might make certain," he said, almost hurriedly, as if his prescription were tinctured with appeal.

"Well, let's have it," I said, somewhat annoyed by his slowness.

He did not regard my matutinal ill-temper, but hung an elbow through the window-ledge and released the tension on his legs.

"The back end of my laboratory is squarely under the outer cabin of your — er — somewhat luxurious quarters."

This Spartan, like so many others, found it hard to condone my luxury; but he hastened onward with a sure intent to speak his thought.

"I can run an electric contact over my outer cabin door, back through my laboratory, up through a hole in the floor, and connect it with a small bell that will tell any one up here when my door is opened. Then, if it were known about the ship that I spend my evenings up here — "

He paused, and I completed the sentence for him:

"We could sit here until the bell rings, probably in the evening, slip down, and catch the man — red-handed! You are right, Jim, and I think we should do it. I'm unhappy when I think there is some one aboard I can't trust, and shall remain so until we nab him. Can you do that wiring to-day?"

"By pretending that I'm ill and don't want to be disturbed."

"Then go to it! I'm just as anxious as you are to capture this gentleman, because I shan't be comfortable

until I am confident as to who he is. I'll see that no one comes into my cabin to-day. That will give you freedom of action. If you are short of wire, you can rip out some of the electric light wire in here, because I can get along without it on a pinch."

He turned without a word of thanks, throwing over his shoulder a muttered "All right, Captain Tom, I'm sick to-day!" and walked out of my cabin. I shaved and bathed as usual, dressed and strolled outward. I breakfasted and sauntered back to our unregistered wireless room, for, with the exception of Jimmy, who was somewhat of an amateur, I was the sole man aboard who was master of the craft, and with the receivers at my ears listened to see what I could pick up that would be interesting. One operator was relating to another some gossip, which was that a certain ambassador in Washington had been given his passports, and across a hundred miles they exchanged their views as to the probability of war between America and a foreign power. I threw the receivers off and returned to my cabin. An unusual sound as of something grinding came to my ears. I listened more intently, and then jumped from my seat with a startled grunt, and stared at the floor. The sharp point of a half-inch bit had struck the sole of my shoe, and was now whirling upward through the carpet. Twisted Jimmy had wasted no time in putting his plan into execution. When the bit was withdrawn I dropped to my knees, put my mouth close to the hole, and called through it, "It's all right, Jimmy! It is through."

"Good! Stand by to take this wire," came the muffled response, and I did, thus assisting him in his meritorious enterprise. I pulled yards of it upward before he appeared, and had a boy's delight in assisting him to fix a small bell, properly stuffed with cotton to muffle it, beneath the top of my roller desk. Not until it was complete and tested did he favor me with a good, wide, free grin. We talked quietly for a time, and then I gave him some views of my own.

"It strikes me," I said, "that our time is pretty short. It would have been better if we had been disturbed sooner. We are getting pretty well south. We would like to catch this chap, whoever he is, the man with the smear, and throw him off at Samaña, where his claws will be clipped for a while. We shall be there in a couple or three days more, weather permitting. Let's hasten matters. To-morrow I'm going to have a birthday for convenience' sake. It's a rather unusual procedure to announce it aboard a boat, but, with one exception, there is n't a man on her who is not like one of the family. She's taken some chances since her first trip, and there's but one man on her who was n't here when we first cleared port. In honor of the occasion, you shall dine with me to-morrow night in my cabin, and there will be just one big, wholesome drink of Ron Bacardi served to every man on her with which to toast my health. It shall be my steward's part to spread the news. It will travel fast enough. And I will let the news float about, also, that you are to be my guest for dinner, up here."

"Good!" he said. "Better than I could have thought of. The man we are looking for will take it for granted that I am out of my cabin for the entire evening. It will give him time to make his false key. We hand him his opportunity, and — nab him!"

He had but gone when I summoned my steward and told him of the fictitious, happy event, and casually let him know that he was to notify the cook to spread himself for the event, and especially for a dinner that I wished served to the chief and myself in my own cabin. I knew that the news would carry; for trivial things interest men who live in hulls. The chief did not appear on that day, but, early the next morning, went below with the announcement of his recovery. He told me, later, that Klein congratulated him, and advised him to rest quietly throughout the day, as everything was running smoothly, which he took to be a very questionable solicitude on Klein's part.

It was apparent that Klein hoped the chief would sleep enough during the day to keep awake — in my cabin — for a considerable portion of the night. Truly birthdays are momentous events, and should be honored on the seas!

It was not entirely without a sense of shame at my deception that I sat down to the meal the "doctor" served on the following evening. When the last course was finished, it was late compared with our accustomed hours. The little bells of the clock that had stood on my mother's table quaintly chimed nine times when the steward cleared away, opened a bottle of champagne that I had ordered, and wished me a very pleasant good-night. We sat alone, Jimmy and I, hearing the stolid footsteps of the man on the bridge, and the peaceful sounds of a peaceful ship ploughing her way across southern waters under a southern moon. War, intrigue, and danger seemed as remote from us as if our ship had been shifted into some untroubled space. We nearly forgot that we were waiting for an alarm; hoping for the springing of the trap we had conceived so that all our doubts might be set at rest. If it proved inefficient, or if the culprit did not respond, then we must have before us further days of doubt in which to distrust and wonder who of all those around us in our little world could be our secret enemy. We were in no mood for conversation, and the taciturn Jimmy least of the two, and were leaning back absorbed in individual thoughts, when the faint voice from forward in im-memorial custom of the sea wafted backward, upward, and through the opened windows, "Four bells, and all's well." The mellow notes of the bell were still echoing, when from beneath my desk came the short, muffled, and insistent rattle of the alarm. Together we leapt to our feet and ran out to the bridge and down the oak steps, the slippers which we wore making soft, clattering noises in the night. I had gained the lead, but Twisted Jimmy, with a longer stride, passed me before we whirled round the white corner of the superstructure wherein was his cabin

and the improvised laboratory. There was a black, yawning space in its neat front, where his door was open to the pallor of the moon.

“By the Powers that be! We’ve got him!” he shouted, as he fearlessly jumped inside and with a practiced hand sprung an electric switch. Even before our eyes had ceased blinking in the sudden high light, a man with a handkerchief tied across his face appeared in the door and smashed the incandescent globe with something he had in his hand. There was a sharp report, a shower of glass, and a cry from Jimmy that was broken by a curious thud and a gasp, and he reeled back against me and fell. Something told me intuitively that he had been sandbagged, and I threw myself sideways in an effort to get out of the light from the open door behind, just as something whisked past my ear and dealt me a heavy blow on the shoulder. I bent and threw myself forward to tackle my assailant, fortunately caught him around the middle, and for a moment we twisted backward and forward, and once I tripped and almost fell over Jimmy’s prostrate body. With a final heave I dragged the intruder back to the threshold of the door and out on to the deck, where we struggled to and fro, I trying to lift him from his feet and bring him to the deck with sufficient force to knock the wind out of him, and he trying to sandbag my head, but raining short-arm blows on my back. He was so heavy and powerful that for an instant I feared he would master me, and was on the verge of shouting to the bridge for help, when suddenly the old jiu-jitsu lessons at the Naval Academy came back to me. I pretended to relax, suddenly threw myself toward his left side, caught his upraised right, and then, gathering myself and whirling quickly, gave him one of “the deadly peril” tricks. Taken by surprise he struggled to recover his balance; then there was the sharp snap of breaking bones, as I broke his arm at the elbow, a scream of agony, and he fell to the deck just as the bridge officer came running around the corner of the deck-house,

shouting, "Stop! What does this mean? What are you about there?"

Recognizing me, he stopped in amazement. I recovered my breath sufficiently to say, "Hold that man there! Don't let him get away if you have to kill him."

The mate at once knelt down to seize the man on the deck, and then looked up at me and said: "I don't think he requires holding, sir. He is either dead or has fainted. His right arm seems —"

"Good!" I said. "But don't take any chances."

A steward had joined us and I turned to him.

"Run up to my cabin, unscrew the incandescent bulb there, and bring it down to me. Hurry!"

I stepped cautiously into Jimmy's cabin, and struck a match. He lay on the floor face downward, where he had fallen. I rolled him over to his back and felt for his heart, and was vastly relieved to find that he was still alive. I tried to get him into his berth, but was too spent for the moment by my own struggles, and too much bruised by the repeated blows that had been showered on my back, dangerously close to the base of my neck. An inch or two higher, and I should have fallen as Jimmy did. When the steward arrived, he screwed the bulb into the electric-light socket, and together we lifted Jimmy into his bunk, where I gave him a hasty examination. It had always been his habit to wear a cap with a quilted top, presumably to keep his bald spot warm, and it had broken the force of a blow that, properly delivered, might have killed him. The steward ran to my cabin for some brandy, while I took the water carafe and doused the chief's head. His eyes opened, and he was beginning to look around in a daze when the steward returned. The brandy revived him, and he staggered to his feet, running his hand over the welt on top of his head before speaking.

"What — what — Did you get him, Tom?" he asked. In my anxiety I had nearly forgotten my captive, so

now I hurried outside, where the mate was still standing guard over the prisoner. Jim came rather weakly after me, and sagged to his knees by the man's head, as I unbound the handkerchief tied across the latter's face. We confidently expected to identify Klein, our new engineer.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Jimmy, as if greatly disappointed. "That's Mike Cochrane, my best oiler, that I've known for more than five years."

His voice had the hurt tone of a child whose confidence had been betrayed. We carried Cochrane into the two cabins I had converted into a smoking-room for the men off duty (not caring to permit such indulgence elsewhere aboard a ship that had been carrying explosives), and laid him out on a table.

"Don't try to bring him to yet," I cautioned the mate, who was preparing to rouse the unconscious man with water. "Let him stay that way until I can look after that arm of his. It's apt to be a pretty nasty and painful fracture. Cut his sleeve away, while I get a pair of splints and some bandages."

The oiler was still unconscious when I returned.

"Heavens! How did it happen?" the mate asked, as I reentered the room. "I never saw such a break as that! He'll be mighty lucky if ever that elbow works again."

Even though Cochrane had done his best to kill both Jimmy and me but a short time before, I suffered a twinge of remorse when I set to work; for I, too, had doubts as to the future usefulness of that arm. Jimmy assisted as best he could, and all the time said nothing, but had that same hurt look in his eyes, the look of one betrayed.

"Here's what he did it with, sir," said the mate, returning from the deck, and held out a "sandbag" made of leather and encasing some pounds of shot. I judged from the size that Cochrane was a novice in the art of sandbagging, for certainly a well-planted blow with the thing he had used might have killed an ox. Jimmy's skull must have been doubly armored.

I was in the act of binding the splints on when Cochrane's eyes opened and he gave a painful groan. No one spoke to him, and I went on with my work.

"T was a most surprising twist you gave me wing, Captain," he said plaintively, and rolled his eyes toward Jimmy.

"And it's sorry I am to have had to bash ye, Chief," he added. "And glad that ye suffered no grea-a-t inconvenience."

"Sorry, you damned thief!" roared the chief, scowling at him. "Then perhaps you'll say what you were doing in my cabin?"

For a long time the oiler appeared to consider this point, although now tormented with pain.

"No, sir, I don't think I shall," he said at last. "But what will yez do with me now?"

"If you had your just deserts," I said, "we'd throw you overboard; but I'll leave it entirely to the chief."

The latter wavered; rubbed his injured head, and finally addressed himself to me.

"Suppose, sir," he said, "we lock him in the spare cabin, where he'll be comfortable until we can talk it over?"

"Small need to lock the door," said Cochrane, "because it's sure you may be that I'll not jump overboard. And for the kindness of yez, Twisted Jimmy Martin, I thank ye."

CHAPTER VII

THE mate returned to the bridge after I had cautioned him to say nothing of the night's disturbance, and Jimmy and I returned to his cabin. Cochrane, when we interrupted him, had been searching the morgue-like laboratory, as was proven by three opened drawers. Otherwise there was no sign of disturbance. Jimmy, now normal, save for a terrific headache, smiled at me

as he pressed a secret spring acting on what appeared to be a solid beam of wood bracing up his heavy bench. A responsive door flew open, and Jim took from a recess what appeared to be working plans of his invention. I esteemed his action as a very great proof of confidence in me.

“Everything is safe,” he said, replacing the roll of drawings. “Perhaps you had best come here and see how this thing works. Then, if anything happens to me, or — can’t tell what might turn up! I might sometime be away and send word to you — and —”

“But, Jimmy! I’ve no desire to know your secrets,” I declared, which was nearly, if not quite, the truth.

“That’s all right,” he growled. “I’m only telling you what I’d like to have you know. You see, you’re the only man I can depend upon all the way down the line, and I’ve just learned that there is n’t a man in the whole world that can travel entirely alone and get anywhere. If it had n’t been for you to-night, it would n’t have ended this way, I’m afraid. I’d like to have you know about this.”

I crossed the room to his side, and was given the secret of the hiding-place, of which he was inordinately proud. It was very clever and skillfully concealed, inasmuch as the spring that opened the bench leg was a double one, in what were mere “knots” in the top of the bench.

“That was made by a man in New York who does nothing else but build such contraptions,” he said, as he closed it. “Can you see where it opens now?” I studied the rough surface of the bench leg carefully, and admitted that I could not. It was a fine piece of craftsmanship. I doubt if any one could have discovered it without previous knowledge.

“Perhaps you had better open it to make sure that you have the combination,” he said.

Being highly interested in such an adroit conception, I did so, thus assuring myself that in case of exigency I

could repeat my performance. I stood to one side wondering if he also proposed to favor me with a like confidence concerning the nature of his pet invention; but either because his head was throbbing so viciously, or because even yet the reserve which for so many years he had maintained against the intrusions of his fellow men was not at the breaking-point, he led me to his outer cabin. I surmised he was dismissing me, and I could not blame him; for, to tell the truth, my own body was so sorely bruised that I preferred to seek my berth. Before unbolting the outer door, he said: "If anything ever happens to me, I should like to have you take the plans which are in that receptacle, together with some notes which I will prepare and place there, and use them as if they were your own. I lay no financial obligations whatever on you if my invention proves a success, because I have neither kith nor kin, and you are the sole friend to whom I care to make such a bequest; but — "

He paused, withdrew his eyes from mine, and for a moment or two stared about him as though secretly perturbed by what he felt to be the necessity for voicing a vanity. When he did continue, he blurted his words as though ashamed of them.

"The only thing I ask of you is credit for the invention. There are certain men whose regard I esteem, who — well — they laugh at me. A man does not like that! Not even a dog likes to be laughed at. I wish to show them, even if I am dead before they know it, that I was not such a damned fool as they thought I was."

Before I could say a word of assent, he had jerked the bolt back, thrown the door open, and put me out as near as is possible for one man to eject another without laying violent hands upon him, — a sort of mental kick that sent me across his threshold and on to the shadowy deck. Had our evening not been one of such turmoil, I rather think I should have disliked his method; but as it was I was glad to go, and went directly to my cabin.

Twisted Jimmy's head must have been harder than my muscles, for on the morrow he seemed completely recovered, and all danger of brain concussion was passed; but my shoulder and back muscles were so sore that I could not don my coat unassisted.

The weather still favored us, and the ship scarcely rolled or dipped, for which I was thankful. When my breakfast was finished, I went to the cabin in which Cochrane was imprisoned. He was in rather a sorry state, but had not so much temperature as I had anticipated. One of the most astonishing facts in existence is how men who have worked at hard physical labor, and have never cared for themselves, can endure, and recover from, injuries which would lay even a professional athlete on his back for days or weeks. While ministering to him as a patient, I made no allusion whatever to either the cause of his injuries or his delinquency. He made it certain that he was far more perturbed over what further punishment we intended to inflict upon him than over injuries already received, for the only question he asked me was: "What are you and the chief going to do to me, sir?"

"We have come to no decision on that point, Cochrane," I answered curtly; and indeed I told him the truth, for he presented something of a problem. Personally, I was inclined to believe that I had punished him enough, but I feared that Jimmy, whose reputation for hardness was so thoroughly established, might prove vindictive. This was in my mind when, after making the oiler as comfortable as possible, I left him and went to Jimmy's cabin. He was not there. I found him in the engine-room, just as the watch was changed, and together we went up on deck, where I had an opportunity to ask him concerning his intentions toward our prisoner.

"Did I understand you to say last night that you were going to leave Cochrane to me?" he asked.

With some reluctance, brought about by the fear that he might favor throwing the oiler overboard, or deliver-

ing him to the tender mercies of a Venezuelan jail, I admitted that I had made such suggestion.

"Then," he said, "I think I should like to have him put off at Samaña. I have been there, and it is not a bad place to stop in for a while, although slightly out of communication in these times." He grinned dryly, and added, "Probably there is not a boat touches there more than once a month now that the war is on."

"That strikes me as rather a horrible punishment," I objected. "I am not heartless enough to let a dog of mine be thrown into one of these island prisons."

"Who said anything about prisons? I don't want him thrown into prison. What I mean to do is to turn him loose, telling the port authorities that he got injured in the machinery, give him what pay is due to him, so that he won't be entirely on the beach, and then forget all about him."

This remarkable leniency, considering all the ill-repute Jimmy had established, was considerable of a surprise. I began to feel that Twisted Jimmy Martin had depths of sympathy concealed beneath that ugly, pugnacious exterior of his that were totally unappreciated. Moreover, I mentally questioned whether he was not laying himself open by this leniency to further injuries from the recalcitrant Cochrane. I rather doubted the wisdom of turning him loose before we were ready to clear from our port of destination, Maracaibo, and went so far as to put this view before the chief; but he was inclined to be insistent, as if he had weighed the matter during the night and come to a resolution.

"No," he said, "you do not understand. First, I could not be free from worry to go ahead with my work with a known enemy aboard. Second, we shall be in Samaña some time to-day, I take it, or possibly to-morrow. I could not prosecute Cochrane in any way without attracting attention to the work I am doing. That might set a dozen spies at work. Next, you may think me a fool

and probably I am, but I am a great deal more sorry than angry about Cochrane, because, you see, I have known him a long time. He was a good worker, and it is the betrayal that hurts more than anything he has done. He will be punished all right by what I shall say to him before he gets off this boat, if he has any conscience at all. There is no punishment in the world that cuts so hard, or lasts so long, as a mental punishment. Anybody can forget that he has been in jail, but no man can forget if he has ever thrown a friend down. So I think my way with Cochrane is by far the best."

"Well, it's your funeral, more than mine," I said, as we separated, and I went about my customary tasks.

It was night when we reached Samaña and dropped anchor in the harbor. The port authorities, even in this remote spot, were alert, due probably to the watchfulness that had aroused the world since the beginning of the Great War. Late as it was, it was but a short time before a boat put off to us, and a port officer came aboard, and it was nearly one o'clock in the morning when he went down the side ladder for his return. I had told him that an accident in the engine-room had disabled an oiler, and that I thought it necessary that the man should be put ashore, and he, in his turn, had agreed to send a launch at six o'clock. So, immediately after my visitors had departed, I went to notify Jimmy. I found him sitting in a chair in front of his cabin, smoking his stodgy old pipe and staring at the moon. I told him of the agreements I had made for Cochrane's departure. He got to his feet, walked to the rail and knocked the dottle from his pipe in a little shower of sparks that fell overboard into the water, before he said anything, and then, with the air of one who has an unpleasant duty to perform, said, "Well, then I suppose we had better go and break the news to him."

When I unlocked the improvised prison and switched on a light, we found Cochrane awake and staring moodily

at us, as if surmising that some decision had been made. I doubt not that he was apprehensive, but at the same time he was stoical enough not to whimper at whatever punishment might be inflicted.

“Cochrane,” I said, “you can thank your lucky stars that it is Martin, and not I, who has the say of what we are going to do with you. We are going to put you off here at Samaña. A launch will come to get you at six o’clock in the morning. You have got fifteen dollars pay coming to you, which I shall give you before you get on the boat. You are going to be put ashore a free man, and we have told the port authorities that you got smashed up by an accident in the engine-room. You owe all the leniency of this decision to the chief and not to me. You can bet your life on that! You tried to be a thief, and on top of that did your best to murder both of us. The fact that you did n’t succeed was no fault of yours. But I want to give you a warning, as far as I am concerned, to keep out of my way. At six o’clock, mind you, you are off the *Esperanza*.”

Stoic as he was, the Irishman could not conceal the vast relief and astonishment afforded by Jimmy’s decision.

“Going free!” he said, as if to himself, still unable to grasp the fact, and persuading himself to its reality by the sound of his own voice. “Going free! And old Twisted Jimmy did this for me after I had bashed him one on the head! And the skipper giving me my pay when I go!” He stopped, and his lips twisted with an emotion that was not physical pain, then shifted his eyes to Jimmy, and the latter moved uneasily and concealed the kindness of his intentions by assuming an extreme gruffness of voice.

“I have no call to be even halfway decent to you, Mike Cochrane, because you have proven something I never thought you was, a Judas. I would not have treated the worst scum of the seas the way you have treated me, but just the same —” He cleared his voice with a terrific

“harrumph,” and demanded almost belligerently, “How much money have you got besides what you are going to get from the skipper?”

“I have got enough, eight dollars and forty cents. Why? What’s that got to do with it?”

The chief thrust his big paw into his hip pocket, took out a worn leather wallet, thumbed off two greasy twenty-dollar bills, and threw them over on Cochrane’s bed.

“You will need that,” he said, “before you get out of Samaña. I am giving that to you the same as I would have given it to the Mike Cochrane I knew a week ago, and I am going to try to forget about the Mike Cochrane I have known since that other night, because I don’t like to remember such men.”

He got to his feet abruptly, said, “Well! Good-bye, I wish you luck,” and plunged toward the door, as if to avoid receiving any word of gratitude from the man who betrayed him. He stepped outside, and in an instant more would have been gone, had not I, starting to follow him, discovered that the oiler’s lips were working soundlessly, and that he was trying to say something, but was unable to speak. He made a significant gesture with his uninjured hand and arm, and I called the engineer back. The chief halted in the door, his huge form fairly blocking it, and stared at me with evident reluctance to return. He was like one to whom an episode is closed and is loath to reopen it.

“Come back inside, Jimmy Martin, and shut the door, please.” The oiler had recovered his voice. “I will not let you go like this. I will not ask you to take my hand, because you would not do it; but I want to tell you before we part the ways that I am not as rotten, maybe, as you think. What I have done is bad enough, the Lord knows, but maybe you would take time to let a poor, smashed-up devil like me tell you what made him do it. You are a white man, Jimmy Martin, and the same goes

for you, sir, Captain Hale. Will you grant me the time to listen for a moment? It won't take long, sir," he said, as if appealing to me rather than to Jimmy.

"Certainly," I said, because I was curious to hear his confession, and also had a fleeting thought that perhaps it might be of value to Jimmy and his affairs. "If you have got anything you want to get off your chest that is worth listening to, go ahead."

It took him some time to control himself to coherence, for he seemed completely overcome by the engineer's kindness and mercy, as well as the memory of his own remissness, which in itself was considerable of a burden; but when once he started to speak, his determination to make a clean breast of it prompted him to talk with Celtic freedom. Not once throughout his confession did he look at either of us, but stared almost absently at the top of the berth above him. He had no occasion to speak loudly in that peculiar and almost thick silence that surrounded the ship now that her engines were stopped and she lay at anchor on the still waters of the harbor. It was a silence so profound as to tempt belief that one could catch and feel it, like black velvet casting folds and swinging through the air. At that hour of the night not a shore sound reached us, and in the deserted bay were no other ships to give the impression of life.

"I am an Irishman, and my father and my grandfather before me were Fenians. We come from Galway. As long as they lived they hated Great Britain, and they taught me the same. There were a lot of us who have had the hope that Ireland could break away since this war started. I have paid all the money I ever earned aboard this ship, with the exception of the eight dollars and forty cents that I have got in my pocket, for Ireland. I would have given more if I had it. Whether it is right or whether it is wrong, it is a man's duty to love his country in his own way. I am not arguing about the justice of it one way or the other, but lying here on my

back I am telling you I did what I did because I thought I was right."

He stopped and twisted himself on the berth, and vented half a dozen objurgations at some one unknown.

"It was that devil in New York, who I met in Casey's saloon, — and may he live a million years in purgatory! — who blarneyed me into this mess. I had never done anything in my life that was n't square and aboveboard. I did not like the job. He offered me money, more money than I had ever seen in my life before, if I would steal some plans out of Twisted Jimmy's cabin and mail them to him from Maracaibo. I was for bashin' him in the face, but Casey grabbed my arm. I would be no thief for money! I told him that plain enough, and this Casey smoothed it over and we had a drink or two, and this fellow patted me on the back and told me that I was a real Irish patriot. He said if I could get these plans and mail them to Casey, then I would be striking a harder blow to free Ireland than was ever struck by an Emmet or an O'Brien. And he said, when I told him I was robbing you, Jimmy Martin, that he would guarantee you should lose nothing, because his Government would make you a rich man after the war was over, and I did not take that either, until Casey, whose word is never broken, guaranteed me I could believe it true. I don't know anything about that man you threw over before we left the harbor. I had nothing at all to do with him. I only promised I would think it over, and, maybe, I would try. All the way down I was tormented between two things: that I was an Irishman with a burning love for his country tearing through his heart, and the other, that to help her I would have to become a thief in the night, a dirty spaldeen, and rob the man who had always been white with me. Twisted Jimmy Martin! Hard old man of the seas! Him that would knock a man down if he came into the engine-room drunk, and that would curse ye with burning words if the work was not done better

than it had ever been done before. This is what they say about yez, Jimmy Martin, and I believed that your soul was made of flint! But just the same I hated to do it to you, because you had always been right with me. I had not thought you a kind man, Jimmy Martin, because never until this day and in this cabin did I think you had a heart. I do not know that I would ever have taken the chance if it had not been for the first engineer sending me up to your cabin, and the door was open and you had a drawing-board there, and were making plans. In Casey's saloon Casey himself gave me a key that he said would unlock your cabin door. Oh! They had it all planned a long time ago, be sure of that. And on the day I saw you drawing the plans, the thought came to me that if you could draw one set, you could draw another, and that it was not such a big robbery after all; so that night I tried my key and it did not open the door. It made me stubborn and made me open a package that Casey had given me which he stated I would find of use if my key did not work. That package had some of this wax that lock-makers use to take an impression, a lot of blank keys, some files, and a word or two of instructions written out how to use the wax, as if I did not know enough without that, having been round the engines and machinery all my life! I am a bull-headed and an obstinate man. I have always been that way. The surest way to get me to do something is to make it hard for me to do it; so I took the wax, made an impression, and the next day filed myself a key, telling the boys that one of the cabin door-keys had been lost. Then we heard, Captain Hale, that it was your birthday, and the doctor was making an awful fuss over the dinner that you and the chief was going to have in your cabin, sir. That settled it! Because I knew that this was my chance to get in and find the plans, and a chance that might not come again. I thought to myself that, instead of mailing them at Maracaibo, I would find the way to mail them

here at Samaña, and would have done my bit for Ireland, and would not have done you very much harm, either, Jimmy Martin. It was easy enough to say to myself, 'I am not robbing him, because I am making a rich man of him as soon as the war is over.' Nobody to be hurt by what I did, and Ireland, that I have loved and fought for, to be helped more than she was ever helped by an Emmet or an O'Brien. I could not find the papers, and for some reason I don't understand, unless it was that the Blessed Virgin did n't want Mike Cochrane to be a thief, you two came into the cabin. I wish I had not had that bag of shot that Casey gave me. I do, so help me, God! And it was nothing but the fear within me that ever made me slip it in my pocket when I started for the dock. It was the fear of a cornered rat and not the fighting blood of a Cochrane that made me strike you down, Chief, after which there was no stopping me; because now it was neck or nothing. And so I fought the skipper like a madman, thinking of nothing but getting away, until he loosened up a little. Captain, sir! I could have bashed ye on the head, but I thought ye was fallin', and I did n't want to hurt ye more than I could help. And then ye got the best of me, and I was very sorry and very frightened, sir. I thought most like I would be hung; but shut my teeth and said that never a word would anybody get from me as to why I done you both a dirty trick. A thief you could believe me to the end, and I would have had my way, too, if I had not found here in this cabin to-night more than I had ever known about Twisted Jimmy Martin, and the big forgiving heart that he carries about with him under his ugly shell. And, mark you this, I have told you the whole truth, and I am ashamed of what I done. But I am not ashamed of what I thought I could do, for be it good or bad, as you may think, there was no malice in me, a horror of having to be a thief, and yet the same call of Ireland as strong as the strummin' of a minstrel's fingers on a great big harp."

He turned, stared almost defiantly at both of us with that queer look of mingled shame and pride in his eyes. I struggled somewhat vainly with a feeling of admiration for one who had, after all, made, from his viewpoint, a quite valiant effort on behalf of his ideals. And I gauged the severity of the struggle which he must have undergone by the feeling that he was an honest man who scorned a thief.

"Well, just the same, you've made a pretty mess of it," I said, and waited to hear what Jimmy might add.

He sat stodgily in his seat, with his chin down on his breast, and his hands clasped in front of him. He shifted and rested his elbows on his knees, and then turned toward me and said: "I don't know about this port of Samaña. It's a rotten hole. I — you said I was to do as I liked with Cochrane, did n't you, sir?"

He frowned up at me with meditative eyes.

"I did," I answered, "and what I said still goes."

"Then," said Jimmy, getting to his feet, "I think I'd like to have you carry Cochrane to Maracaibo. He can get out of there almost any time, and he might stay in Samaña till he died."

"Whatever you say," was all I could reply, but I parted from the chief engineer in a sort of mental maze, wondering if he were a sentimentalist after all, or if, in spite of his pretense to being an aloof man, he was not what the English call "soft"!

Therefore it was that when the launch came from the shore the next morning, it went back without a passenger, just as we began to unload the consignments we had for the town on the beach.

CHAPTER VIII

HAVING once assured Jimmy that whatever disposition he made of Mike Cochrane, the patriot run wild, would be sanctioned by me, it was beyond me to retract; but I was sometimes doubtful about the wisdom of carrying the oiler to Maracaibo. And these doubts continued to lurk at intervals in my mind, entirely without any adequate reason; for there was never a passenger aboard a ship who kept more completely to himself than Cochrane. So strong was his constitution that before we reached port he was frequently out on deck at times when he could be alone, but he avoided the other men from below as if dreading an interview of any kind. None of those aware of the cause of his injury spoke of it, all having been cautioned by me. But anything in the least inexplicable is apt to become a mystery aboard ship, and I know not what rumors spread.

It was in a bright forenoon and under a hot sun that we made Maracaibo and found it, like so many other ports, almost deserted. On other occasions when I had been there its harbor had been speckled with craft clear up to the shoals leading to the beautiful lake behind; ships fragrant with coffee, ships smelling to the skies with their cargoes of hides; ships flying all flags. It was remarkable how the ravages and hazards of war had cleared the port. There were but two ships loading, squatly little British steamers, built hurriedly after the war broke out, one taking on hides, probably to supply the English Army with shoe leather, the other taking on coffee and cocoa, destined, probably, to the same consumption. The city, with its Spanish houses, appeared sweltering, and even the tropical trees around the Plaza drooped.

And it was there that we put Cochrane ashore. First his box, then a ditty-bag, and lastly himself, were stowed

away in the stern of a boat. The chief engineer had gone to the cabin where the oiler had been immured. What Jimmy said to him I never knew; but I saw, as the row-boat pulled slowly away toward the shore, that Twisted Jimmy waved the oiler a good-bye. I did not. I was glad to see the last of him.

Without incident we delivered our cargo to its consignees, and I doubt if a quicker unloading was ever made in Maracaibo, where good dock laborers in ordinary times are scarce. There was a positive clamor for charters, but unfortunately most of them were destined for European ports. I had brought the *Esperanza* to Maracaibo through tropical waters with the idea of having relief from the anxieties of transatlantic voyages, and therefore I took my time in deciding what outward-bound cargo I should accept. I desired nothing for Europe.

And while I was in this uncertainty, a most curious bit of news was given me by a Yankee shipping agent, named Farnes, with whom I had had dealings and who was by way of being the best friend I had in the port.

"Captain Hale," he said to me, banteringly, as I came into his office one morning, "I hope that you are not running away from any one, and that you have not done anything to put spots on your reputation?"

"Not that I know of," I answered with a laugh; "but what under the sun led to that observation?"

"The same old thing — mysterious stranger making inquiries concerning you, your rating, where you were born, what you have been doing, your personal character, particularly for honesty, and a thousand other similar queries; but I think I have a knowledge on one inquiry he made that no one else possesses. This information is for sale immediately upon receipt of one cigar from that estimable collection which you have in your pocket case."

Accepting his banter, I laughed, and handed him a cigar, telling him to fire away with his secret. He first lit the cigar, then conducted me to his private office, threw

himself into a chair, and, with his feet on his desk, told me what he knew.

"The oddest crank in Venezuela, and probably the richest in this same benighted country, is an expatriated old Frenchman, who calls himself Monsieur Hector de la Périgord. It is my private opinion that he left his country for his country's good, and that for the last twenty years he has been trying to restore himself to its good graces in order that he might return to the land of his nativity. It is a most unusual thing for a Frenchman resident in the tropics, and possessed of enormous wealth, to refrain from making a visit home at least once a year; let alone more than twenty years. And to my certain knowledge, Monsieur Périgord has not made such a visit in that time. Get me? Also I do not think that he really loves the Venezuelans, because I, being an American, have been honored with this distinguished business for nearly fifteen years, and once secured him a passage completely through to Washington, where he went to visit the French Ambassador to the United States. I know he went there because he told me so himself. I asked him why he did not see the French Minister to Venezuela, and the old chap very brusquely shut me up with two snaps of his fingers and one immense shrug of his shoulders that made him look for all the world like a turtle. Anyhow, he went direct to Washington and came directly back. For a long time after that, he was rather caustic in his criticism of France; but when the war broke out he veered round and became, as all Frenchmen are at heart, a most fervent French Patriot."

He stopped, smiled absent-mindedly through the cloud of smoke in which he had surrounded himself, and I, failing to see what Monsieur Hector de la Périgord had to do with me, said so.

"Why," he replied, "just this much: that all I have told you is preliminary to my real tale. The old man was in here two or three days ago himself, and asked me

a lot of questions about you, how long I had known you, who you were, and so forth. I told him that I first knew you when you came into this port on your father's ships, then how I missed you for some years while you became a full-fledged lieutenant-commander, with brass buttons and some gold lace, in the service of Uncle Sam, and how, much to my surprise, you returned here a mere merchant skipper on your own ship. Maybe I did wrong, but, being rather an admirer of yours, I could n't refrain from adding, what a lot of us know, that you have been one of the most nervy and successful submarine dodgers on the transatlantic route ever since the war broke out. That interested the old man mightily, and when I told him that you had devoted your energies and astuteness to freighting cargoes of exclusive high explosives, the old fellow was so pleased that he actually unbent and crackled. But even that did not seem to entirely satisfy his thirst for knowledge concerning you, because he sent a big long cablegram to a business connection of his in New York, asking this man to find out all possible concerning your honesty, cable him the result immediately, and at the bottom of the message he put the word, 'Urgent.'"

While I had received the previous whimsical recountal with nothing more than amused interest, I now brought myself up with a jerk and became quite seriously concerned. That this man Périgord should send such a telegram might mean many things not entirely without jeopardy to either Jimmy Martin, the *Esperanza*, or myself. I was puzzled.

"How the deuce did you find this out?" I asked.

"I was down at the cable office and the old man was just ahead of me at the wicket. His message was lying there in plain view as I passed mine in and waited for the clerk to check it up. Catching sight of your name on the old man's piece of paper I took pains to read it through," he answered unblushingly and with a broad and cheerful grin.

"But what do you make of it? What is he up to? I don't know him, in fact I had never heard of him until you mentioned his name. I wonder what he can want?"

"I'll be blest if I know," was the only satisfaction I got.

We were interrupted by a visitor, and I went from the office over into the Plaza, where I could loiter about and think this new situation over. It is astonishing how suspicious one gets after having his head bumped a few times by such occurrences as had taken place aboard the *Esperanza* since she left New York, to say nothing of the constant vigilance which I had been compelled to keep during my hazardous trips with munitions. I had actually arrived at a point where anything unusual strung my nerves up to a state of apprehension. But, try as I would, it was impossible to conceive a connection between Monsieur Hector de la Périgord and myself, and, further, I was drawn to the conclusion that Jimmy Martin's woes were not at an end, nor the machinations against him. And in the meantime, since reaching port, Jimmy had taken advantage of the brief spell of ship's idleness to plunge into his own mysterious experiments to such an extent that he no longer left his outer cabin for his meals, but had them brought in to him, bolted them, shoved the tray outside the door, and locked every one out. I did not think it wise to disturb Jimmy with mere conjectures, which, for the next forty-eight hours, I tried in vain to whip into something logical. And then came the most astonishing surprise of all, for, bright and early one morning, a visitor appeared at the *Esperanza*, asked for me, and said in rather faulty Spanish that he would highly esteem the favor of being permitted to visit my ship. Although I did not like visitors, I had no reasonable ground for refusing such a request, but why on earth any one with friendly intent should care to look over a mere tramp freighter was beyond my imagination. My visitor made his way to the deck, and, with a most punctilious and exaggerated bow from the hips forward, introduced him-

self. "I am Monsieur Hector de la Périgord," he declared, and then extended his hand.

You may be sure I looked at him with far more interest than I had hitherto shown, and what I saw was a most absurd little man, certainly more than seventy years of age, withered, dried, wrinkled, tanned like old leather, and a most inordinate fop. I do not mean by this latter that he was loud in his jewelry, so much as in the immaculateness of his attire. He wore a panama hat of the utmost fineness I had ever seen. He wore a high collar with an elaborate cravat. He wore a fine flannel suit with a check more suitable for a young college man than for such a withered old crow, and his feet were encased in white spats and pointed patent-leather shoes with high Cuban heels. He carried a pair of the yellowest chamois-skin gloves I ever saw, with black stitching on the back, and flourished a walking-stick that had a band of brilliants around the head. Between his gloves, sticks, and panama hat he found it difficult to gesticulate with his hands, and for an instant presented the appearance of a lively whirlwind in a country lane. He declared he knew nothing whatever about ships and was merely curious to look one over; but I am a Dutchman and a landlubber if he did not forget himself and ask certain questions about her engines, power, speed, and so on, that indicated to me that Monsieur Hector de la Périgord was not so ignorant as he pretended. He complimented me in my very softest spot by remarking that the *Esperanza* was as neat and well-found as a first-class man-o'-war. He exhibited not the slightest interest in Jimmy Martin's side of the deck-house, nor did he so much as mention the chief engineer, whose absence ashore he seemed to take for granted. We had returned to my cabin, where I tried to prove a hospitable host, before ever he spoke a word of French, and then asked me with the utmost suavity whether I understood his native language. It is about the one accomplishment of which I am proud, and he expressed his

unbounded delight at my knowledge of it, and now in most excellent French talked volubly of France and her position in the war. He made this an excuse to invite me to dine with him that night at his home.

“Ah, m’sieur le capitaine, it is such a great pleasure to hear one’s own tongue again when so fluently spoken! You will give an old man a great deal of pleasure by conversing with him for just one little evening. I implore you to come. You who have been on the other side so frequently since the beginning of this terrible war must have much to tell an exile whose heart still beats for his country!” he declared, thumping himself on his shrunken chest with both his hands, gloves, and stick. He seemed totally unaware that he had let slip a remark betraying knowledge of my exploits concerning which I had given him no information. But I concealed any sign of notice, which was not difficult for one whose face is always distressingly wooden. I knew no reason why, if he was chasing me for his own purpose, I should not do likewise with him. Therefore, without any hesitation whatever, I accepted his invitation to dinner. He insisted on sending his private car for me; but I did not propose to take a chance of that kind.

“Very well, m’sieur,” he said; “ask anybody to bring you to my residence, or direct you. Every one in Maracaibo knows Monsieur Hector de la Périgord.” And with that we parted.

Plainly, from the ease with which he relinquished his design to convey me in his own automobile, this was no cheap abduction plot; but I took the precaution, just the same, to slip an automatic pistol into my pocket that night and to notify both my chief mate, Rogers, and Jimmy that I was going to dine with Monsieur Hector de la Périgord, and that nothing short of a serious accident could prevent my sleeping aboard the ship that night.

The heat of the day had given way to the balm of a tropical evening when I made my way from the Plaza,

with its chattering groups, its young cavaliers who ogled sly, twittering señoritas, mantilla-crowned, while a band played most vehemently that fine old Spanish air, "The Scissors-Grinder."

The residence of Monsieur Périgord befitted a man of his wealth. Huge iron gates opened into a splendid driveway that wound itself in beautiful curves through a most exquisite garden to the front of the house, which was a pillared one, more like a governor's palace than the abode of an involuntary exile from his country. Whatever pangs of nostalgia Monsieur Périgord sustained must have been ameliorated by his surroundings in this land where he had thriven so exceedingly well. I was immediately ushered in by a footman. The floors of Monsieur Périgord's home were of imported tile laid with that cunning of which the Italians are masters. The statues in the broad and ample hall of Monsieur Périgord's home were priceless. And the *patio* of Monsieur Périgord's house was one that would have filled a Pompeian aristocrat with envy. There were palms, pergolas, and colored fountains within it, and the table, with subdued lights, stood white, cool, and inviting in a little loggia. I observed that preparations had been made for two persons, and wondered at the concealed extent of Monsieur Périgord's ménage. I half expected to sit at his table and hear, as I had once heard in Morocco when being entertained at a nabob's home, the whispered rustlings of silken garments and the suppressed laughter of numerous women behind the jalousies. My host himself met me in the *patio* and in person conducted me directly to the table. Possibly the belief that I was but a merchant sailor had prevented him from donning dinner clothes, and I fancy he was somewhat surprised when he saw me in a dinner jacket. He treated me as if I were a friend of long standing as he gestured me to a seat and placed himself opposite. There was nothing, however, in the conversation that followed which sounded either interrogative or enigmatical. The only

questions he asked were those pertaining to what I had seen, or surmised, as to the French situation. Discretion itself could have admired his turn of conversation. At the beginning of our repast he had commanded the shutting-off of the fountain lest the sound of its torrent disturb us, and it was not until we had come to black coffee and liqueur, of which he was very worthily proud, that he beckoned a servant and said to him: "The other servants have all gone, have they not? Good! Then you may turn on the fountain again and go yourself. I wish to be alone with the *señor*. See to it that we are not interrupted."

For the time being we leaned back in our chairs, he with an observant eye on his servitor and I watching my host with a curious sense of expectancy. I surmised that all that had preceded was but a preliminary sparring for the main event. The clash of the falling water when the fountain resumed seemed inordinately loud after the well-ordered silence of the *patio*. It was almost disturbing to me, and I think when his gaze returned he appreciated this, for he leaned across the table and remarked: "When two men wish to hold a confidential conversation, *m'sieur*, there are but two places where it may be held in safety. One is in the midst of a crowded street, and the other where the splashing of innumerable drops of water into a great basin disturbs the eavesdropper's auditory capacities. Not that it matters so much here, where my servants are all, I hope, trustworthy, and where, also, I believe none knows or speaks French, in which we shall converse. Ah! You think this has a formidable sound? But you are wrong. You have no occasion to suspect me or my motives; but I rather admire you for that. It assures me that you are cautious."

Actually this strange old man had read my very thought with a most uncanny intuition, and I knew, instinctively, that if we were to be enemies I had an opponent of whom I must needs stand in awe; but very abruptly he thrust

his *petit noir* aside, tenderly put the Venetian glass with its liqueur out of harm's way, leaned his elbows upon the clean whiteness of the table, bent his head toward me, fixed me with searching eyes, and said: "M'sieur, you have been patient with me thus far, and I implore the continuance of your courtesy while I give you confidence. I have trust in you because I have made inquiries concerning you. See! I know all about you!"

He suddenly lifted his elbows, shoved a hand into an inner pocket of his coat, and produced some papers, among them several that were obviously cablegrams, and, beginning with the first, referred to them as he talked:

"You are thirty years old; your father gained renown for honesty; you have a home left you by him in Cotuit, Massachusetts, where your mother died some two years ago. You were an experienced sailor before entering the United States Navy, where you gained nothing but praise. You have established a reputation for honesty and courage that is without blemish. You are presumed to be struggling to establish yourself in a line of your own which will put you beyond the necessity of captaining your own ships. You have had a most noteworthy success thus far. You are in Maracaibo most unexpectedly, and for me most opportunely."

*I was dumbfounded by the amount of knowledge that my host had obtained and waited expectantly to know the reason for his extraordinary interest in who and what I was. Nor had I fancied that so much of a man's life and career are so open a book and so easily read by any inquirer.

"Whether you are justified in probing into my private affairs, or as to who and what I am, Monsieur Périgord, it is not for me to say," I replied; "but what interests me most is why you have taken the pains to make such inquiries regarding a mere skipper of a freight boat who has come to Maracaibo."

“Patience, patience, m’sieur le capitaine,” he said, with a faint smile. “I crave an old man’s indulgence. It is necessary that I make you my confidant, and I lay upon you one embargo, that you shall not betray my trust in you as a gentleman in case nothing comes of our conversation. I may seem to have been impertinent in thus investigating your history, but to me, at least, my own situation has warranted it. Had you been better informed of France and, I might almost say, ancient history, you would have known my name. In my youth I was the leader of a most turbulent Royalist party, resolved by any possible means to restore the throne, and seat upon it a legitimate successor. I was expelled from France and have never been able to return. I may add that my great ambition is to pass the few remaining years that may be allotted to me in the land of my birth. I have been unable to accomplish this, despite all my wealth and my properties. And I have learned, too, that my youthful ambition was a great mistake. France is struggling for her life. She battles against odds. She is a helpless virgin assailed by a brutal aggressor. Her soil is redly soaked with the blood of her valiance. Her lands have been trodden upon by the heels of a clumsy and ruthless invader. She needs the service of such as I who have but shrunken and withered arms to give for her physical defense.”

He stopped speaking and suddenly thrust his sleeves upwards, exposing two attenuated, skinny arms, that he held toward me, while his hands, claw-like, trembled and repeatedly opened and shut obedient to a vigor of mental agitation that was very expressive. I looked at them for a moment and then upward to his eyes. It might have been the light of the fountain by our side; but to me they glowed a dark and fathomless red. They were shining with such a glint as is thrown back from the blades of moving spears. Aye, it was the flaming spirit of France herself that was flashed upon me across that little table

in the *patio* of Monsieur Périgord's house, and it was an awesome, defiant, unquenchable flame, such a flame as that with which France, glorified, confronts her foe. I was awed by this light.

"My country," he said, resuming, "needs gold; not so much for its credit, which is amply provided for by the bulwark of Great Britain's strength, but for her own immediate use at home. Every million francs in gold in her treasury to-day strengthens her purpose twofold. I wish to send you to France with just three million dollars' worth of gold, which I have laboriously accumulated through all possible means at my disposal!"

He slapped his hand on the table by way of emphasis, and leaned back in his chair. To say that I was completely swept from my feet by this entirely unexpected proposal would be putting it mildly. I had come to his house apprehensive of menace, fearful that some new attack was to be made upon my friend the engineer, believing that possibly I was to be confronted by another tool of the great European Power, only to find that this peculiar old exile had brought me there, after making so many inquiries regarding my probity, to intrust me with the conveyance of a fortune into the war zone which I had forsworn. It took me a full minute to adjust my mind to the change. I thought him foolish.

"But," I protested, "why not let me convey it to New York? It is safer. You must be aware that at this stage of the war it is a very risky procedure to attempt to land such a cargo in France, across waters that are thoroughly infested with the most modern and devilish submarines that man has ever invented."

Very stubbornly he replied: "Yes, m'sieur, I am aware of the difficulties and the risks, and that if I chose I could send my money to New York, all of which does not alter my original premise that gold in France to-day is more potent than anywhere else."

For a long time he sat with downcast, brooding eyes,

and then, as if ashamed of a perfectly natural desire, spoke in a queer, embarrassed tone of voice:

“Besides, you fail to consider that I have a double purpose! I have, first of all, a fervent desire to assist the land that I still claim as my own, and I should do that without hope of reward were it not for that cry of memory which makes me trust that there are men in France to-day who, because of my unexpected action, will think more kindly of one who made so many serious mistakes in his life, has now repented, and — perhaps they will forgive. Oh, you do not know what it means,” he said almost fiercely, “to be a hopeless exile from your own country, barred out as unfit, conscious that your span of life draws near its end, and longing with an ineffable yearning to be pardoned and to return once more to the land in which you were born. It is a very terrible tragedy, m’sieur; one which I should not wish inflicted upon the worst enemy I ever had. My most fervent desire is to be permitted to return home.”

I appreciated then, to the full, his terrible homesickness, that crying nostalgia which had been his, despite all his achievements and all his successes, and that was intensified as he approached the end of life. He had sagged in his chair and looked old and broken. His shrunken fingers pecked at the edge of the tablecloth, and his voice came to me brokenly through the noise of the fountain that suddenly had grown louder. I got but fragments of his sentences.

“Dead — wife — children — all gone but me — money, but that is nothing — strange land — no hope other than this — France!”

The lights in the fountain had made their endless round again, and now filled the *patio* with a melancholy blue which, pervading his face, made of it something ghastly and hopeless, like one on the verge of death. The colors shifted to a pale green, and then to the warmer shade of red, in their slow round before he again spoke, in a voice

indicating that he had recovered and curbed his emotions. Now he became very matter-of-fact in reviewing his purpose.

“My investigations concerning you have been thorough. One must needs be sure of a man to whom he intrusts so much. You are able, experienced, fearless, and are fighting to make profits. I offer you an enterprise which will bring you more return than any in which you have ever embarked. Just one successful trip and you are a made man. Your risks are great and your reward will be in proportion. I am rich enough to make it immensely worth your while. If you will take full charge of this shipment, land it in France, and deliver it, together with a letter which I will give you, to the Minister of the Treasury, I will pay you one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Think of it. Enough to buy two ships such as the one you own, and, m’sieur, there is another reward which, I believe, will appeal to you — that reward which comes to a decent man in the knowledge that he has done an inestimable service to one who stands in crying need. That is I.”

I submit that the temptation was great. It would, as he said, make me financially, and enable me to enter into greater projects; but the responsibility of such an undertaking, knowing as I did the dangers that must be incurred, was far more appalling than the mere conveyance of a cargo of high explosives.

“But suppose I fail? Suppose they were to sink the *Esperanza*, and such a cargo were lost? Can you get insurance to cover it?”

“Perhaps,” he said, “by the payment of an inordinate sum. You and your honesty, however, are my best insurance. Whether or not I decide upon other shall be for me to judge, and does not enter into your and my bargain. Will you undertake it?”

Even then it took me a long time to give a decision. The war had assumed a phase where no ship that crossed the seas, no matter what her flag, nor her cargo, stood

equal chances of ever reaching her destination. And yet, so touched was I by this man's need, and so tempted by the possibility of gain, that in the end, in one reckless impulse I cast all questions aside and answered him very simply: "I will."

CHAPTER IX

MONSIEUR PÉRIGORD again proffered me the use of his car for my return to the docks; but I was in a somewhat thoughtful mood and chose to walk. After I had left the stately home of my peculiar host and had time to recover from the almost hypnotic influence he had upon me, I rather regretted the impulse that had led me to agree in such an offhand manner to this extraordinary transaction. None knew better than I the difficulties of such a voyage as he proposed, and also that the odds against my ever landing that cargo of gold in France, and then personally conducting it to the French Treasury at Paris, were long. It did not seem fair that I should, in such a case as this, demand blind and unqualified obedience from my crew. It could not be generous to Jimmy Martin, for whom I had conceived such a great liking, and in the success of whose experiments I had become so profoundly interested, to ask him to jeopardize that floating laboratory where the result of his life's work was accumulated. Again, it seemed more than selfish to ask him to remove it and himself ashore in a foreign port so far from home.

I doubt if any one was ever more perplexed than I, as I sat for a time on a dock snubbing-post with folded arms, and stared out toward the *Esperanza* where she lay at anchor. Another steamer was entering port, her prow disturbing the still waters of the bay, and the voices aboard her sounding mellow and indistinct across the intervening space. About her was an air of fugitive haste,

as if she had escaped from terrifying peril and was overjoyed to find refuge. A night bird, frightened by her hoarse whistle, flew through the skies with plaintive alarm. In the silence of the hour the very clang of her bells and the stopping of her engines, as she forged slowly ahead in her own momentum, sounded heavily. Then came the barking words of her boatswain and the strident rattle of her anchor chains through their channels as she "dropped her hook." Little and constantly diminishing waves raced ashore and lapped the piles beneath me with faint, caressing sounds. A watchman, carrying a useless lantern, came trudging down the wharf, talking to himself, voicing his speculations as to the newcomer's identity, and thus betraying the habit of one who spends much of his time alone. Aroused from my lethargy, I blew my whistle for a boat, and heard sounds of movement aboard the *Esperanza* as the men climbed overboard and took to the oars. I watched its progress, hailed, went down the weathered oak steps after it had touched, got into it, called "Give way," and leaned back still absorbed in my meditations.

Despite the lateness of the hour I was confident that Jimmy would be awake, so went direct to his cabin. In response to my knock he opened the door to a mere crack, until he identified me, and then threw it wide and invited me to enter. He bolted it carefully and then returned to his laboratory, where, as if careless of my presence, he continued the work upon which he had been engaged. He was wearing a heavy eye-shade, such as jewelers wear, and his face, silhouetted against the shaded light, was as strongly featured as that of a Sioux Indian's. He had apparently been in the act of completing something that looked to me like nothing more than an elliptic-shaped glass, or lens, and I waited for him to speak. It must have been fully ten minutes before, with a sigh, he laid it down, pushed the eye-shade to the top of his head, turned toward me, and asked: "Well, what is it?"

He lounged on his elbows with his back against the bench, as I told him of Monsieur Périgord's remarkable offer, and when I had concluded said without hesitancy: "Of course you are going to accept it! It sounds to me like a chance you can't afford to lose. That old chap is right; for if any man can get his swag across for him you are the one."

"I did accept," I admitted, "but somehow, thinking it over since then, it seems to me I was both hasty and selfish!"

"Selfish? What do you mean by that?"

"Why, just this: that it does n't look decent to put your work into such risk."

He vented an almost scornful grunt, straightened up to his feet, turned back to his bench, picked up the piece of crystal on which he had been working, carefully rolled it in cotton, and placed it in a drawer, before he replied:

"Risks? I have been taking them all my life, and —" he grinned toward me — "particularly since I've been with you. One more trip won't hurt me!"

"But," I objected, "suppose they get us this time? What about your invention and all you have done, and all you have here in this room?"

For a little while he appeared to consider the situation, and I saw that his eyes now and then contemplated the different apparatus which he had gathered about him.

"I would hate to lose it," he said slowly, "but there is nothing in this world that can't be replaced. All this stuff that you see here is valuable; but the biggest value in this shop is here" — and he tapped his head suggestively — "right here in my memory. Good Lord, man! I can see every piece of it in my dreams when I try to sleep at night after a hard day's work. It's all there, although it might take years to get it out again. You have stuck by me through thick and thin, and if you think I'm not going to stick by you, you're badly mistaken."

"Then," I began, "it's only just to you that you get

a pretty big share of the profit if we pull it off. And I propose —”

“Oh, never mind all that,” he interrupted me; “we will count our chickens after they are hatched.”

I went to bed considerably impressed with his faith in me, and having also eliminated one obstacle. It was with much confidence, therefore, that I called my crew together on the following morning, told them that I had agreed to a dangerous voyage into the war zone where the chances were ten to one against us, and asked no man to engage therein if he felt otherwise inclined. Perhaps the fact that I told them their premiums would be large in case of success had something to do with their enthusiastic approval; but I am convinced their loyalty to me was the greater reason.

Up to this period the German Government had pretended, at least, that it would respect the rights of unarmed neutral ships; but sinister tales were whispered afloat, and I resolved to procure suitable arms if possible, and, to avoid complications with the Venezuelan Government, get them secretly aboard. Farnes, through rather illicit methods, I fear, succeeded in purchasing one three-inch gun and an eighteen-pounder, high velocity, with fifty rounds of ammunition for each; but how to get them and their mountings aboard secretly, puzzled me.

“I can help on that too,” Farnes declared. “I think I know a way. Did you notice a British tramp in the harbor? Well, her master, Captain Roberts, is a friend of mine. Perhaps you can get a chance to talk with him — say, down on the wharf this evening.”

And I did. He was an elderly man of the old sailor type, and came directly to the point.

“Anything I can do to assist you, Captain Hale, I shall,” he said. “In a way we are both doing something for the good of my country’s cause. Of course you must get the guns aboard without any one knowing it, so you can at least have a chance to fight. I was chased by a U-boat

about a hundred and fifty miles to the east'ard. If he learns you are armed, he will sink without warning, and I am informed there are numerous German spies here who endeavor to keep their submarines informed as to sailings and cargoes. Yes, you would have a much better chance to fight for it if no one suspected that you were able to defend yourself."

Knowing what I did of German methods, I could but agree. It was his own suggestion that, inasmuch as he could trust every man of his all-British crew, he should take the gun-cases ostensibly to his own ship, and that night convey them to the *Esperanza*. It was also his suggestion that I could coast eastward when I cleared to a certain secluded cove and there mount them undisturbed. And so well did he subsequently carry out his voluntary service that it seemed an impossibility for any one to know of it.

The *Esperanza*'s ostensible cargo of cocoa, rubber, and tropical products was already taken on and stowed. There remained nothing further to do but get aboard by night our real cargo of treasure. Gold is one of the most difficult commodities in the world to handle, because of its small bulk and concentrated weight. Any one who has ever assisted in transporting some five or six tons of it in small boxes that are back-breaking to lift, knows that this is true. Moreover, I could not share this secret with either the broker or my newly made friend, Captain Roberts, without betrayal of one of those peculiar confidences which Monsieur *Périgord* had imposed upon me. Therefore I was compelled to conduct the job with my own men, unaided by any outside assistance, and if ever there was a tired crew it was mine when, in the darkness of the early morning hours, the last of the treasure was aboard. To guard against all chances I myself superintended its removal from the dock. A liberal bribe kept the night watchman at the farther end of the dock where he could not see too much, and I often wonder since

what queer cargo he must have surmised we were taking aboard. Monsieur Périgord had made me promise that I would come to his residence and report to him the moment the task was consummated, regardless of the hour. I had cleared my ship in the late afternoon preceding and was determined to get away by dawn. Therefore I lost no time in hurrying through the quiet streets to the Frenchman's residence, where in person he admitted me.

"Well, it is done," I said, "and so far, so good. We shall be off within an hour or so. Have you any further instructions to give me?"

"None whatever," he said; "I leave it entirely to your skill and tact. Please take this letter to the Minister of the Treasury, in France, and give it to him when you make your delivery. If, by any chance, that delivery is never made, destroy the letter, please, unopened."

Again I was almost overpowered by the responsibility of my task, but I was to a certain extent relieved by his next speech.

"During the last few days I have thought over what you said about insuring it and tried, notwithstanding the enormous premium, to place the insurance with the only reputable firm here. They would not gamble on it for any reasonable sum, and considering the exorbitant price I must pay, I did not close with them."

He must have seen the look of perturbation that came over my face when I realized that the secret might possibly leak out now that these people, whoever they were, had no incentive for keeping the news to themselves; for he added, as if he had read my mind, and was stilling my suspicions:

"Oh, you need not have the least fear of their laying my application before the public. They are men of honor. Do not be alarmed on that score. Nor must you, remembering that I am trusting entirely to your honesty, let it increase your anxieties; for if you do not succeed in your mission I shall grieve more over the loss of your life than for the loss of my treasure."

"But, monsieur," I blurted, "what desperate risks you are taking on my honesty! Why, you have left me in a position where, if I were a thief and made away with the entire consignment, scuttled the ship, and came back with a tale of shipwreck, you could have no recourse against me."

"Quite so," he said, quietly; and then, with that rare smile of his, "but you will not. Honest men don't do such things, and I have taken the utmost precautions to assure myself of your honesty. If the gold never reaches France I shall know that it has not been the fault of an officer and a gentleman, for such you are and such you will remain. Go now, and God bless you! I shall hope for your safe return, and if your mission is well done I do not think that, regardless of the stipulated sum which I am to pay you, you will lose much in the future for having befriended one who, while very helpless in his exile, has the means to reward those who serve him."

I looked back at the first turning in the graveled roadway which would hide the house from my sight. He was still standing in the open door, silhouetted against the light behind, and the silhouette strongly brought to me the certainty that he was but an old, infirm, and broken man, borne down by the burden of a great heart-hunger. I felt very sorry for him, and vowed that if skill and determination of mine could accomplish his object, they should be given to the utmost.

In my haste to get aboard the *Esperanza* I almost ran through the town and down the long dock, the sound of my footsteps reverberating from every side. My boat was awaiting where I had stationed it, and as I threaded my way through the huge, misshapen piles of freight with which the dock was cluttered, they seemed like the monstrous forms of strange animals, waiting to pounce up on me. I got into the boat and the men pulled away. Dawn was approaching with tropical swiftness as I looked back toward the dock from which I had embarked. Sud-

denly I saw something that made me shut my teeth in anger. A man had stepped out from behind one of those huge, ungainly piles of freight, and now stood clearly outlined as he rested his one arm on a post. The other arm was lashed and held up by a white sling round his neck. There could be no mistake. Mike Cochrane was there watching us off. For a moment I was sorry that I had not broken his neck instead of his elbow, for the sight of him on this night was in itself suggestive and menacing.

CHAPTER X

WE got the *Esperanza*'s anchors up, and as quietly as possible moved down the harbor. As we passed the big British tramp close astern a voice from the bridge, through a megaphone, wished me good luck, and I saw that Captain Roberts was aware of my departure. His little shout of encouragement seemed an offset, in a way, to the perturbation I had been caused by the sight of the discharged oiler on the dock. We swung to the eastward, laying our course close to the land-line until we came to the cove which Captain Roberts had suggested as a suitable place for me to mount my armament. It proved to be an ideal spot; for from the time we began our work until it was finished we were undisturbed. A native came off in a punt, rowed round us curiously, and then, as if accustomed to strange visitors, went back to his own affairs. My preparations had been so completely made before leaving Maracaibo that it was not a very difficult task to mount my guns, with the heaviest one aft. I superintended the work myself, even to the fastening of every stay and bolt, and when the guns were mounted, with my own hands tested the mechanism. It was in perfect order, and it was now that my long experience in the Navy came into good play. My second mate was, fortunately, a man who had done eight years' service in

the United States Navy, wherein he had a gunner's rating. I discovered, also, that we had two other men aboard who had served on men-o'-war, and I proceeded, therefore, in that sequestered bay, to gun-drill. My first mate, Rogers, was a man thoroughly competent to take the ship in emergency, and I therefore decided to handle the heavy gun myself in case we were attacked. I was convinced from remarks that came to my ears that most of the members of my crew were rather eager to meet a submarine and try conclusions, when, at last, our work was done and we placed the tarpaulin covers over the guns, took steam, and started on our long voyage for Bordeaux.

We laid our course outside Curaçao to bring us between the Windward and Leeward Islands of Santa Lucia and Martinique; the former being British and the latter a French possession, both of which would prove friendly to us in case we wished anything. Before the first day had passed we had settled down to routine. The possession of the guns, squatted fore and aft, in their canvas suits, imbued us with a sense of protection and ability to defend ourselves. Somehow our long spell of freedom from worry seemed to have given all of us better nerve control than had been ours when returning from our last voyage of hazard. We seemed to have gathered ourselves together again and to face the forthcoming cruise with the utmost coolness and equanimity.

The night was exceptionally calm, and I was sitting in my cabin writing a letter, when I was disturbed by Jimmy, who came rushing unceremoniously up the bridge steps and into my door, and paused inside. Since the night when he told me that he proposed to stay aboard the *Esperanza*, I had scarcely had an opportunity to talk to him, for he seemed terribly engrossed with his own work. So, when I looked up at him, as he stood inside my cabin door, I welcomed his visit; but I checked the words of greeting that came to my lips and stared at him in surprise.

He was like a man suffering from a mental tremor. He

was bareheaded, and stood running his fingers nervously through the fringes of his hair, and his eyes glittered so strangely as to suggest a highly unstrung condition, bordering on insanity. He suddenly came close to my desk, reached across, and, with an emphatic thump on my blotter, said hoarsely, "I've got it. By Heavens! I've got it!"

"Got what?" I said. "If I did not know that you were a teetotaller I should be tempted to say that you had the jim-jams."

As if this were a joke, he laughed in a high, unusual key, straightened up, and then, with a great air of triumph and secrecy, bent forward again until his face was close to mine, and declared: "The invention — my invention — is completed. My life-work, friend. Come to my cabin, come quickly!"

Without another word he turned and ran in that same excited fashion from my room, and I could hear his feet pattering down the bridge steps, taking them two at a time. I was forced to the belief that he had indeed achieved some sort of success, or else that he had gone mad from over-work and delayed hope. In either event it was my duty to follow after and calm him, which I did, deliberately thinking, meanwhile, what I could do in case it proved madness and he intractable.

Jimmy was waiting for me at the cabin door, and immediately led me back to his laboratory after taking great precautions to assure himself that no one could spy upon us. The intricate brass apparatus had been added to by another since I had last stood in the laboratory, and these two were standing close to the inner door, this giving for his experiments the full length of the room. Suspended from one of the ceiling girders was an iron plate, a full half-inch in thickness, and of such weight that I wondered how he had succeeded in hoisting it up alone, until I discovered that each side was equipped with a system of pulleys. At the farther end of the laboratory was a square of paper

covered with print, quite large, but not of a size to permit my reading from where I stood. The iron plate was so close to the camera-like eyes of the two brass mechanisms as to shut off any view through them. The plate itself was nearly four feet square. Jimmy turned to a battery of switches on the wall behind him, over which was fixed a closely screened toy light, giving merely enough illumination to distinguish the switches after the main lights of the laboratory were turned off. He switched the lights on again, as if satisfied that everything was in working order, and bade me stand behind one of the machines with its eye-pieces, which in outward appearances were like binoculars with shields above them.

"Now keep your place and look through them," he said, as he again stepped back and switched off the lights, leaving the room in utter darkness. Naturally, I could see nothing. I heard the click of one switch after another behind me, and the room was filled with sharp sputtering sounds, not unlike those thrown out by Röntgen rays, but more vicious and reaching a pitch of sharpness somewhat higher than the rasping staccato given forth by wireless apparatus. It was of such piercing quality that my eardrums throbbed, and I cried at last:

"Hold on a moment; I shall be deaf if this keeps up."

Instantly he threw the switch, the noise ceased, and again the room was filled with light.

"Oh, I forgot that your ears are not attuned to such a note, although I suppose that mine are from having experimented so many years."

He went to one of his cupboards, took out some absorbent cotton, of which he made two pads, and slightly solidified them by an application of some plastic wax.

"Here, stuff these in your ears and it will deaden the sound," he said; and I obeyed, and again took my place in front of the eye-pieces.

This time, when he resumed his experiments, I heard nothing more distressing than a low buzzing noise, which

impressed me as having the character of separate shocks repeated with such rapidity as to be almost prolonged into one note. For a time I saw nothing but a positive blackness in front of me, and then there came a definite change in the quality of the sound as if another and distinct note had been added to and blended with it. My utter amazement at all that followed can be imagined. I was not only looking through the iron screen in front of me, but saw, standing in the darkness and shining in a vivid green light, the piece of printed paper fastened at the end of the laboratory. Moreover, its letters had now, under intense magnification, leaped in size until they stood a full inch in height. I could read them as easily as one might read the letters on a hoarding across the street. The edges of the redly illuminated paper seemed writhing and twisting with some curious refraction of light, as if the vibration were being thrown from it and flowing over the borders. The somber blackness against which the card was fixed had taken on a curious and ghastly green. For but an instant I stared, and then jerked my head away from the eye-pieces and looked around me. The room was as black as ever. It seemed incredible, for again, when I looked through the same eye-pieces, the paper still stood out, an inexplicable phenomenon.

The buzzing ceased as abruptly as it had begun, save that it dropped in a whining crescendo, and I turned toward Jimmy just as he threw the last switch illuminating the laboratory. I saw that his lips were moving, and pulled the wads from my ears in time to catch the end of a sentence.

“— And another point is that you were looking *through* that iron plate, and that plate is actually a section taken out of the side of a ship. My invention is, therefore, just as startling as was Röntgen’s. In fact, I have gone him one better in a more difficult direction. With these two machines, mostly made with my own hands” — and he shook both his hands, palms upwards in front of me, as if to impress upon me the work they had done — “I can

look through the side of this ship into the water beyond. I can look through the water itself as easily and to as great a distance, I believe, as can a man on the deck of this ship see with the aid of a fairly powerful searchlight. That man could see only upon the surface of the water. I tell you, Tom Hale, I can see beneath it. Think of the possibilities. I can revolutionize a thousand undertakings that have hitherto been done by clumsy methods, and I can undertake a thousand others that have hitherto been impossible."

For a full three minutes he ran on volubly, singing a pæan of exultation, and then his mind leaped forward imaginatively to possibilities that sounded absurd, and so wild and unbelievable that had I not witnessed his first step I should, more than ever, have questioned his sanity; but now, standing there in his workroom and eying that huge iron plate through which I had just read the print on that scrap of paper no longer within the power of my eyes, I could but believe that he was entitled to jubilate. I have but a layman's scientific knowledge and am not peculiarly endowed with imagination, but I could follow him to a vague degree, although mentally bewildered by the flow of his words. The man had suddenly become to me not only a rare inventor, but a prodigious dreamer, quite unlike the reticent, scowling, Twisted Jimmy of the engine-room. Whether any of his dreams could ever come true might prove another matter, but the fact was patent that he had at least accomplished a scientific achievement. I recalled that other great inventors had been laughed at, and that a great many of them had revolutionized old ideas and made their own commonplace knowledge the concomitants of civilization.

I was standing like a man half stunned when he concluded.

"Gets you, does it? I don't blame you. It will have the same effect on a lot of others some time. I shan't try to explain it to you to-night. In fact, I am a little bit too

much upset myself to explain it lucidly; but I will tell you this, that some of my ideas have been proved, and, Tom Hale, if ever any of them succeed commercially, I am going to share with you, because you have stood by me more loyally than any man I have ever met. Others have derided me for more than twenty years — men that should have known better. You backed me up on blind faith, and as sure as there is a God in heaven your faith shall not be misplaced."

As if suddenly relaxing after such prodigious excitement, he leaned back wearily against the partition for a moment, and I was concerned by the drawn look of his face. I strove to divert his mind by getting him away from that mysterious room.

"It seems to me," I said, adopting a ruse, "that this is an occasion worthy of a small celebration, and that we might go to my cabin and at least drink a libation to success."

He turned off the lights, locked the laboratory door, and then the outer door, and followed me dumbly up the bridge steps, and back to my cabin abaft the chart-house, where I rang for my steward. All the inventor's loquacity seemed to have been expended in that one outburst of enthusiasm below; for he threw himself into a chair, sagged down, and for a long time stared absently as if engrossed in his own thoughts and forgetting where he was or my presence. Indeed, he scarcely spoke during the visit, save on the occasion when he lifted his glass in response to my toast for his success, and then said, as if reiterating his determination to make me a sharer in his enterprise: "What I said down there goes, you understand. You are in on this. It's bigger than you think. It will get both of us somewhere, some day. Take my word for it."

With that same abruptness that characterized all his actions, he turned immediately after that single speech and went below. I will confess that it was well toward dawn before I could calm myself to sleep.

CHAPTER XI

AS if deathly tired after a strain that had lasted for years, Twisted Jimmy Martin reported himself off duty to me on the following forenoon, confessed that he had been unable to sleep and had devoted the entire night to some adjustments, proved them, and added the improvements to his rough plans. I gave him a sedative from the medicine chest and sent him away to sleep. And sleep he did, through nearly twenty-four hours; for when, drowsily, he reappeared on deck, he had the look of a man who has made up a vast amount of lost time. We were ploughing steadily through a sea as smooth as an inland lake, with the morning sun shining flawlessly upon us from a clear, soft blue sky, and but a few minutes before had raised land, presumably the head of Martinique. It was a peaceful sea, a peaceful sky, and the ship herself seemed peaceably inclined. I heard Rogers, as he paced to and fro from wing to wing of the bridge, humming an overly-sentimental ballad from a music-hall, and then in an instant all was changed. From the crow's nest, where we kept a man constantly stationed, came a hail to the bridge:

"Something just come up off the port bow, sir, that looks to me like a submarine."

I jumped to my feet, seized my glasses, and ran out to the bridge, where the mate was focusing the long glass on a distant object. There was no doubt about it. To an experienced eye the two thin tubes that were slowly coming upward could be nothing else than the twin periscopes common to the latest type of U-boat. I had given the general alarm before her periscopes and superstructure had reared themselves above the lazy, rippling water. From the stoke-hole came the clang of shovels, and from the Esperanza's funnel a cloud of black smoke. Men aroused from sleep off-watch came running to the deck. The boatswain's whistle shrilled in quick, staccato treble, and

the whole ship seemed suddenly aware of menace, yet bravely resolute in her determination to meet any odds. Her screw began to turn to its utmost speed, and men ran to the quarters I had previously assigned, all with as much precision, I flatter myself, as if we were a man-o'-war. The submarine appeared to pause for a moment, and then displayed German colors and signaled us to heave to. I was astonished at an odd hesitancy on the part of the U-boat; but suddenly from a gun that was hoisted up from her back forward, a shot was fired across our bows.

I waited no longer, but ran down the bridge steps to the heavy gun aft, and as the *Esperanza* swung on a port helm that brought her stern in line with the submarine, myself aimed the gun, and fired. The shell leapt away, struck short, ricocheted, rebounded completely over the submarine, and exploded on the far side, raising a column of water. The *Esperanza* twisted on a starboard helm, like a fish, and I listened for the discharge of the smaller gun in the bow. Something was wrong forward, and I heard curses, exclamations, and then a shot. The shell, well aimed, took the water but a yard or two in front of the U-boat's bow, and did not explode! I waited, expecting it to be followed by a torrent of others, for the man at that gun knew his business, and with such a fair mark could not fail to score hits; but instead I heard his voice above all the tiny turmoil, roaring objurgations, and now he came running to meet me, for I had started forward to learn the cause of his failure.

"The charges are all dead, sir," he shouted. "Somebody has done for us fair! And even the shot I fired, with the shell that was in the chamber, did n't blow!"

I shouted to the chief mate on the bridge to swing to port and give me another chance with the eighteen-pounder, which was now our only hope. The *Esperanza* yawed sharply, and we swung the gun to catch the submarine, now submerging rapidly, and again fired. There was a splash so close to the forward periscope that the men

cheered; but there came no spout of water announcing an explosion that would have finished our enemy for that combat at least, and possibly forever. This shell also had proven to be a dud, and failed. We thrust another shell into the breech, the men around me, including the veteran gunner, voicing their disappointment with deep-chested shouts, and again we fired. There was no fault of the range. I take credit for that, at least, because it was visibly proven. The forward periscope was shot away as cleanly as if cut with a knife. But again there was no explosion. We were as impotent as if we had been using ancient ball shot! I bent over and examined the shells that had been spread in readiness behind. Outwardly they were perfect. Reckless of consequences, the old gunner unscrewed the cap, examined it but a moment, and thrust it toward me.

"The tortional spring and piercing needle have been cut clean away! And not long ago, sir, because, see! the place where the knife clipped them has scratched into the metal and is still bright and fresh! The percussion fuses are no good!"

I looked. There was no doubt of it. We had been betrayed.

"Examine the others," I ordered, "and if you can find one that is n't defective, use it and fire at will!"

I ran to the bridge. There was no hope left us save in maneuver, luck, and speed, and the chances were all against us. There was not the slightest use in bellowing down the tube, for the telegraph had stood at "Full speed ahead" ever since the German boat had been sighted, and the *Esperanza*, tuned and strung to the utmost, obeyed the master hand of Twisted Jimmy as she had never before obeyed in her adventurous life. She fled like a frightened thing, running as she had never before run, twisting and dodging as never before had she twisted and dodged, quite as if, endowed with individual intelligence, she fought for existence. And she fought boldly, ringing with defiant noises, belching her torrents of smoke upward

in fearless, angry plumes, and pointing her nose toward the uprising faint blue of the land, as if seeking it for a breathing-spell and intent upon resting there until she might recover from the ignominy of flight and gather resource to meet all comers unafraid.

A lean-jawed, clean-shaven, gray-haired man, born to the seas from the Cape Cod rocks, stood at her wheel, alert, obedient, and capable, as we flung her straight away toward our only goal. She was doing a clean fourteen knots — a full knot and a half of speed more than she had ever attained, and I began to hope. She ripped the water in twain with her poor, blunt, futile bow, leaving a spreading line of waves abeam, while her wake foamed and boiled as if with fury. I was proud of her, in that brief time, this first steamship I had ever owned! I think I came to love her, as if she were animate, and possessed soul.

And then, as if to deride us and our efforts, there uprose from the still seas on the port quarter, a single lean line of gray — the remaining periscope of our enemy. It came as a shock, as a humiliating answer to our pride; for the submarine, running on a straight, undeviating course, awash, had outdistanced the brave old *Esperanza*, and lay in wait.

It was as if a half-dozen men sighted it at the same time, for they raised a warning roar in unison, mingled with my order to the wheel, "Hard to starboard!"

The *Esperanza* shifted responsively to the hands of the lean-faced man from good old Cape Cod, presented her stern, and there came a roar as the gunner, seizing the shifting chance, let go another shell that, like its predecessors, was worth no more than a round shot, and missed by feet rather than fathoms. Nothing but a direct hit could count, and yet he did his best; better, I am sure, than I could have done, for he pelted away with grim determination, wholly absorbed in his task, mouthing intermingled curses and orders, and standing by his piece. The shells

might not explode, but to the very ultimate he would try the chance to its utmost. We lurched violently through the blue waters, exercising all ingenuity, all resource, and intent on reaching refuge, but the enemy was also ingenious and alert, and was now certain that we were overpowered. He, too, ran zigzags on the surface, making it almost impossible to score a hit. Splashes astern, abeam, and by his bows told the excellence of our marksmanship, but he took all risks as bravely as did we, and relentlessly closed. Now we ran ahead, and then slowly he gained and closed up abreast until we ran parallel. The gun aft was brought to a tangent that was clearly impossible. We fell to our zigzag course again, and for a time tried to out-maneuver our pursuer as in a great game of play on favorable waters, rather than intent on life and death. Always, however, our enemy closed in, and now, at last, when the outline of the land was distinct and clear beyond us, and safety almost in sight, he came to his opportunity. As if wearied and beaten by impossible odds, the *Esperanza* was again twisting to expose nothing more than the small target of her stern, when there came a sharp cry from a man on deck, and I saw the thin, rapidly advancing line of foam that told of the progress of a torpedo. I watched it as if fascinated, and found that my hands were clenched tightly around the bridge rail. Faster! Faster! If we could but turn a few feet — and — it was hopeless! I held my breath, waiting for the inevitable explosion that must be our undoing.

It came like a geyser of water on the starboard, directly amidships, and the shock twisted and shook me, and I found myself still clinging to the rail, and a sudden stillness had succeeded all those choral sounds of our flight. The *Esperanza* was still under way, but from her hollows came no longer the whir and clash of machinery full driven, and full working. Steam suddenly puffed upward from her escapes. Jimmy had opened her valves. The screw had stopped, and we traveled forward in ever-lessening



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momentum. Men, blackened and begrimed with oil and grease, streaming perspiration, came running from the engine-room and stoke-hole. Last of all came Twisted Jimmy, as blackened and sweaty as the others, and trudged heavily to the deck beneath the bridge.

"We're hulled! Hopelessly hulled! The engine-room's a mess and she can't float for more than ten minutes," he said calmly.

I ordered the boats away, seized my ship's papers and ran down from the bridge. Already the *Esperanza* was settling with sickening rapidity, and the men, muttering savage imprecations, but as cool in demeanor now that the fight was finished, as if it had been a mere game of pitch and toss, were in the lowered boats and waiting for me. I rushed to Jimmy's cabin. The door was wide, and inside the laboratory that he could use no more, he stood glaring at his bench.

"Look! Look!" he roared. "It's open! They've robbed us at last!"

There was no doubt of it. The door of the secret receptacle stood wide, and it was empty. I had no time to comment, for suddenly there was a sickening lurch of the deck, and it was plain that the *Esperanza* was going.

"Come on! Run!" I shouted; but Twisted Jimmy stood like a man bewildered by a great loss. I seized him by the arm and fairly forced him from the cabin and through the door. The ship was quivering in her death-throes, her bows rising slowly into the air forward, and her stern settling. The slant of her deck beneath was so great that we had to jump for the port rail to keep from sliding amidships, and together we climbed over it, planted our feet to get the greatest possible take-off, and sprang into the sea. The boats had pulled hurriedly away lest they be swamped, and just as I hit the water I heard the men in the port boat shout encouragement. Then came a suction that was like the clutch of a million tiny hands dragging me under, and I knew that the ship was taking

her final plunge. I caught my breath, held it, and swam with frenzied upper strokes as I felt myself going down, ever deeper and deeper. It is possible for a man to live a very long time in a very few seconds! And a man drowning, I am convinced, uses both lobes of his brain for one of the few times in his life. I had a peculiar sense of dual personality. One half of my mind fought with terrible desperation for life, but the other was remarkably busy with thoughts of work unfinished, and the old dreams. Was it not strange that I felt a great regret over my failure to be of service to Monsieur Périgord, who had so fully trusted me; that I remembered all he had ever said, and that then my mind flashed farther back to Marty Sterritt, to all the love and hope and hopelessness that she had given? I don't believe I had ever until that instant, when plunging helplessly downward, and with Death wavering very near, realized how much I loved her. I wondered if, on hearing of my fate, she would bestow upon me a moment's grief.

The pressure was becoming unendurable. From every direction, upon every surface of my body, tons of weight were rushing forward, malevolently, to crush me. No compress of torture could have been so complete, no hopelessness more entire, than what I suffered. The half of me that strove for life was exhausted and despairing; the half of me that reviewed my life had finished its task, and, wearied, paused to rest. And then, with reeling senses, resigned to death, I was abruptly thrown upward as if on the swirl of a gigantic bubble, and all senses resumed, somewhat languidly and annoyed, the never-ending struggle for life. I was on the surface, breathing great drafts of air, sore as if bruised, dazed by the unexpected, marveling at reprieve, and moving with mechanical motions of legs, lungs, and arms. Shouts that sounded a long way off, and faint, battered at my ears. A harsh hand caught me by the folds of cloth covering my back, and lifted me higher. I had lived an

age, in those few seconds, and was back again, and my mind was resuming its sway in exact proportion to the timing of my lungs, that gasped and fought for air. My senses were swinging back to normal, and back to life, that had so narrowly escaped being torn from me.

"Put your hand on my shoulder!" — a voice familiar and yet unfamiliar shouted. "Thought you were never coming up! The boat is almost here!"

And now it dawned upon me that the hand and the voice were Jimmy's, and that it was he who supported me. I was obedient. I put my hand on his shoulder, and as he swam, felt the hard-working muscles beneath. Sturdily he swam, with far-flung arms, and then I felt other hands, and the drag of hard, firm wood, and awoke as from a dream to find myself hanging across the side of a boat, with my men tugging me aboard.

"We'd given you up, Skipper," said a sailor, as I sagged to a thwart.

"And I guess he'd have gone, all right, if the chief had n't been there on the spot, when the last air in the good old *Esperanza* vomited him up," declared another voice.

"Is he all right?" queried some one else; and another reassured him: "Sure he is! They all act like that when they've been under for three or four hours. That is, if they act at all!"

I rather fancied the qualification. I laughed. Then for a minute I was very sick. Then I crawled to a sitting position, looked around, steadied myself by an effort, and saw but three objects on the immediate sea: the starboard boat pulling heavily; a great whirl of water, in which there eddied, round and round, pieces of wreckage of a ship; and, slowly coming toward us, a shining, gray, and monstrous shape, the exposed portion of the submarine that had sunk us, running light. A voice from her deck hailed us in a brawling shout of clear English, "Pull alongside here, you men. In which boat is your captain?"

I was fully revived.

"Here," I shouted, and knowing that we were helpless, ordered my men to make way toward the gray shape that was now coming to a stop.

"We're all safe but Klein," some one said; and for this I was thankful.

I moved over to where I could reach Jimmy, who sat, huddled and dripping, on a seat. "Jim," I said, and then could n't speak. All the words of gratitude that were in my mind rushed so rapidly together that they were confused and unutterable. I could but thrust my hand toward him and catch his hand, that came up instinctively to meet mine. All that I might have said, and which I should have said, went into the contact of our palms. I came nearer to the heart of the man in that one moment than ever before. I am certain he understood. I am certain that he was as far from words as I; for he clutched tightly, looked into my eyes with affection, and said: "Next time you go under, better not stay so long. 'Taint fair to keep a man waiting that way. I was about all in, and — I'm not so young and strong as I was a few years ago!"

"Which boat is the captain in?" a harsh voice called, and I turned to see that we were nearing the submarine, on whose moist deck stood a half-dozen men in the uniform of the German Navy.

"In that one, you slob! You were told once before!" exclaimed the angry voice of the chief mate, Rogers, from the other boat, that was converging with us to the meeting-point.

Fearing reprisals for this outspeaking, I got to my feet, and answered in person:

"I am the master of the ship you sank! You have done about all you could; so what do you want now?"

"Pull alongside and come aboard," was the order, and from the men around me came varied, fragmentary, earnest, and muttered advice: "Scrag him, sir!" — "Kick

him into the sea and we'll bash him with our oars!" — "Don't you hesitate to do it, sir, because they're swine!" — "Grab him and hand him over to us, Captain, and then they dassent hurt you."

Knowing that this was a time for certain though unwilling diplomacy, I quieted my men, and bade them put me aboard. The submarine had a tiny landing platform with steel steps arranged so nicely in conformity with her awash surface that I mentally admired them as I stepped upon them from the thwart of my boat and mounted. I stood on her surprisingly large deck, and looked for her commander. I gasped with surprise. The man who confronted me was Count Waldo von Vennemann. Of the two, I was by far the more perturbed and "off my feet," although he, too, looked astonished. He gave me a chance to recover.

"I wondered," he said, with a grin, "if the man I was supposed to intercept was my old friend, Commander Thomas Hale." I was still staring at him. "It is the fortune of war. I am rather sorry, in a way, for I used to like you. I'm glad you were not drowned when your ship went under."

Certainly I could find no objection to that. He had changed but little in appearance since last I saw him in Torquay, although I fancied the smile was not so free. There was an air of hesitancy and embarrassment about him, due, I thought, to our relative positions, for he seemed to thwart me at every turn, and that without malice. Two loves I had known, that of a woman, and my first steamship, and he had robbed me of both. I think my manner repelled him, for he became more official.

"It is necessary, Captain, for me to search each of you individually," he said. "My cabin is at your disposal."

He bowed toward the commodious hatch of the conning-tower, and said to a waiting officer, in his own tongue: "Captain Hale was once a friend of mine. See that he is treated with all the courtesy that the occasion per-

mits. Take him to my cabin, where he may strip for examination."

"I thank you, Count," I said, bowing to him, and had started down the steel ladder when his voice again arrested me, and in its tone, I fancied, was something of sympathy for a bested rival: "If you will permit me, Commander, I should like to place a dry suit of clothing at your disposal. I may have to detain you some time, and will have one of my men dry your uniform."

I was convinced that the count was doing his best to extend a kindness, and, although he was my enemy, saw no reason why I should not accept his proffer, and did. It was very strange to be shown such attention as was given me. It was strange, too, to go below in that huge submarine, larger than any I had ever seen, for I estimated her to be something more than three hundred feet in length, a veritable submersible cruiser of the latest type. I had no chance to look about me with more than a passing glance, but saw that the boat was infinitely superior to any I had ever seen. There were tiny cabins for the officers, and a recreation room for the men, in which stood a "baby" piano, and a gramophone. The count's cabin, into which I was ushered, was small, but well fitted.

"The Herr Captain speaks German?" queried my conductor; and on my admitting it, added, "You will please take off all your clothing, and let me have it for inspection."

I should have protested, but saw the futility of it when a prisoner and subject to an inexorable order. I wondered why this careful search! Another man, evidently a steward, entered and assisted me to remove my dripping garments. He opened a drawer in the neat little dresser, took from it a suit of civilian clothing, and laid it by my side. He disappeared and returned with a large bath-towel, and would have assisted me to dry my moist body had I permitted. When, this task completed, I turned around, my own wet belongings had been removed, and

the officer had disappeared. The steward said in his lisping Saxon, "Excuse me, sir," and withdrew, closing and locking the door after him. I donned the clothes and found them comforting after my immersion, sat for a moment on the tiny chair, and then got to my feet and looked about me. Almost the first object upon which my eyes fell was a photograph of Marty Sterritt, as I had known her. Marty, with the frank and fearless eyes, with the quizzical little smile on her lips, with the free poise of the fine head on the rounded throat! There was nothing whatever written upon it, not even the then customary friendly sentiment. For a long time I sat there, looking at it with a great pain and loneliness in my heart where she reigned; for no matter how harshly one grips and controls his thoughts, and tries to adjust them to the irrevocable, there are many wounds which never heal, and must, on occasion, throb with pain.

I was aroused from my reverie by the sound of voices in the narrow passageway, one of a man talking a very broken English, and the other Twisted Jimmy. I heard the door of what I presumed was the tiny recreation room being shut, and waited in suspense. There were some ugly tales abroad upon the seas concerning the treatment of officers of sunken ships who had been taken prisoners to Germany. Fate had handed me a more than usual "ugly punch" by making my captor the one man in the world whom I should have chosen last for such a rôle.

Outside I heard the movements of machinery, and was for a moment convinced that we were about to get under way. And then my ear, recalling old and familiar sounds of the time when I had done submarine service in my own country's Navy, identified and segregated the steel chorus into intelligent cohesion, and knew that the U-boat was turning her Diesels to replenish her storage batteries. For nearly an hour we rested there in suspense, and then the steward who had taken my clothing returned with it, dry and warm, over his arm. He told me I could re-

habilitate myself, and without further comment departed. I had barely resumed my own apparel when he appeared at the door again, held it open, and said I was to follow him. At first I suspected that I was to be conducted to prison quarters, but soon discovered that we were retracing our steps and about to climb upward. I stepped out on the commodious deck of the monster submarine, and found myself facing the count. My impression was that he was vastly annoyed by something that had happened before he saw me; but then he assumed an appearance of complacency.

"Captain Hale," he asked quietly, "did you call the roll of your men after you took to your boats?"

"No, but my men have."

"And are any missing?"

"One only, our engineer."

"And you don't know what became of him?"

"Naturally not. Otherwise he would have been in one of the boats," I said, none too graciously, and thinking of poor Klein's fate, that but for good luck might have been my own.

"So it was your engineer you lost, eh?" and then caught himself and hesitated, giving me room for thought.

The count stood looking about him for a moment, and it gave me an opportunity to appraise the scene. The two boats of the *Esperanza* were still alongside, with my men seated in them, all in a watchful silence. From the deck of the submarine two machine guns were pointed threateningly toward the boats, although the big gun that had been visible when we boarded had been lowered into its well and the plates reset above it.

"I'll say this for your men, Hale," he said, suddenly turning toward me again, "they are the sullenest, most uncompromising, unresponsive set that I have ever encountered at sea. And one and all, they must have lied, because they insisted, unanimously, that not a man was missing."

Mentally I grinned at their stubbornness, for I knew they had lied merely to keep him thinking that their losses had been nil; a sort of "Ya! Ya! You didn't get any of us, after all! What are you going to try next?"

Clumping feet were coming up through the conning-tower, hammering the steel steps, and Twisted Jimmy appeared. His clothing also had been dried, a decided compliment to him as well as me, the only two men of the *Esperanza* who had been immersed. Count Vennemann gave an impatient gesture toward the boats, and Jimmy was escorted to the little side ladder, and told he could get aboard. The count motioned to the men nearest him, and they withdrew as far as possible.

"Hale," he said, "you can thank your stars that you were once a friend of mine. We don't always take such pains with prisoners." There was a grim significance in his remark that sat sourly on my mind. He must have divined my thought, for he hastened to an apology for himself. "Oh, I make no excuses; and war is war. You people don't see it as we do because you are on the opposite side; but don't think for a moment that I am in the least bit proud of this berth of mine. I'm merely doing what I conceive to be my duty by my country."

To me the very fact that he felt it necessary to apologize was proof of a moral distortion; for how can a man, though he be a trained and disciplined officer, obey a dishonorable order at the cost of his own personal sense of fairness and honor? Better that he resign, and if need be, die.

I did not deem words necessary to Count Waldo von Vennemann that day, as we stood alone on the back of the steel monstrosity that he commanded, for anything I might have said would have been wasted. He saw as he saw, and his ideas and mine — for which I still thank God — were very different. I have yet deliberately to send any defenseless thing to death, be it man, woman, or beast!

As if angered by my impassiveness and silence, he suddenly said: "I shall not hold you a prisoner. Had that engineer of yours survived, I might have— Go! Get aboard one of your boats, Captain Hale. I wish you a very 'Good-Day,' if not an '*Aufwiedersehen*.'"

"Thank you," I said, and returned his bow as if we were still in dress uniform in two punctilious services that were at peace.

I made my way to the nearest boat, and stepped into it. The men began to mutter grinning congratulations, but I silenced them. As if eager to lose sight of me, Count Vennemann whirled, gave a curt order, and then actually stood there and smiled at us as his craft, running light, took on way. The men at the oars of our boat fell to them to clear the wash, then rested, and we watched the submarine swing gracefully out in a wide arc, and head westward. With enviable speed she swam out into the distance until the men on her deck appeared to walk upon the sea, and then we sadly began the long, hard work of a thirty-mile pull toward the nearest land, with my boat in the lead, and Jimmy sitting close by me and staring back at the chief mate's boat in our slow wake.

"What happened after I left?" I asked the second mate, who was nearest to me.

He spat disgustedly over the side, and said: "They came and hauled the chief out because that stiff-backed skipper of theirs said he would give him some dry duds. Then, after that, they took us up, one by one, made us strip to our hides, and stand there while they went through our clothes like a lot of professional pick-pockets. They even ripped the linings out of my coat. Look at this!"

He pulled the lapels of his jacket open, and displayed the damage.

"They kept all my letters, sir, but gave back everything else. They did n't spare any of us. They made all the men in one boat climb aboard their sneaking sub, and I'll be blest if two men did n't get into it and go

through it as if searching for a fortune rolled up in banknotes and jammed into a crack. A wood ant could n't have escaped from them if it had bored a hole in the wood and caulked the entrance with oakum. Then they made us pull off about twenty feet, and did the same to the other crowd and the other boat. After that their skipper and a couple of his officers held a confab and acted puzzled. They asked for the chief officer, and when Rogers told 'em he was it, wanted to know if any men were missing. Rogers tells 'em 'No. Don't you think we were smart enough to save all our men? What do you take us for? A lot of barge-men with no more discipline than rats, or submarine smuts and tinkers?'

"'Not too much lip there,' says their skipper, and Rogers shut up, because, maybe, I think he had an idea he might get you and the chief in bad; but he does a lot of talking to himself. On this boat we took the line of talk from what we heard and swore we were all here. We did n't say a word about poor old Klein being lost, because we were n't going to give 'em any satisfaction. If they had n't taken you and the chief below, we'd have made a try for 'em, and got their cussed boat! The bos'n said he'd get the skipper, and the third said he'd put the conning-tower hatch out of commission so they would n't dare submerge, but we decided it was too risky. If you and the mate had been on deck, it would have been different. Then, while we were trying to make a plan, they got those two machine guns out, and we saw that we had n't a chance on earth. That's all. Just stripped us, searched the boats, and put us back."

I looked at Jimmy, who had twisted about in his seat to listen, and he shrugged his shoulders; then with an air of the utmost depression said: "It's all right! But they've got me, just the same, and the worst of it is, I don't know who to suspect. They were handed the plans by some man they took aboard their craft. You can bet on that!"

"Plans? Plans?" queried the second mate.

But Jimmy reverted to his usual silence, and for a long time sat bent forward and utterly dejected. We were quite certain that Klein could not have been the traitor, and, after our encounter with Mike Cochrane, whom we had trusted, did not know whom to suspect. But it seemed possible that the theft had been worked out to completion by some one who had kept Jimmy under surveillance.

I sat for a long time trying to reason out each useless feature of the situation. It was very confusing, and did not exactly dovetail. If we had a spy among us, why had n't he imparted the information that the chief engineer, whose plans the Germans had so long coveted, was aboard? Yet, if the plans had been surrendered by the man who stole them, why care further for Jimmy, or what became of him? That being so, why was it that the spy had not declared himself when the others of us were put aboard the boats? What need for further watch on Jimmy? Again, had Vennemann knowledge of the plans, and had he not searched each man individually merely to gather general information that might be of use to his Government? That seemed possible. But if that was so, why scrutinize the boats so carefully? And what did they know about the gold? Had information been given them that we carried a fortune aboard? It seemed unlikely, and yet I saw again, as distinctly as a mind might mirror, the picture of that renegade oiler, Mike Cochrane, as he stood there on the pier the night when we took the treasure aboard.

Vennemann had undoubtedly been reluctant to torpedo the *Esperanza*, which could be accounted for in but two ways — one that he wanted something aboard, and the other, that he still preserved some friendship for me. But to premise the knowledge that he knew the *Esperanza* was my boat, opened other considerations, and yet in my own mind I was convinced that he was surprised at learning that I was there. If not, he was a very competent

actor. If they were after the plans of Jimmy Martin's invention, to be delivered them by an agent aboard, why not endeavor to disable us by shell-fire until we were rendered helpless? If they were after the gold, why not pursue the same tactics? And, "lastly," as the preachers say, if we were but a chance victim of their campaign of sea isolation and destruction, why show us any mercy at all? Also, why search after we had succumbed?

From what Jimmy had said, and his utter dejection, I surmised that he still believed that his precious plans were the object of attack, because to him these were the greatest and most valuable prizes in the world. That is so with all inventors, be they merely working on a scheme to electrocute gnats or a mechanism to absorb all energy from the sun. Yet the plans had been taken; the gold sunk; the life of a trusted and proven man destroyed; my ship, that I had learned to love, lost; and here were the rest of us, uncertain, baked by the tropical sun, and pulling laboredly toward nearest land. It was all disastrous, no matter from which angle it was viewed. My own loss for a time overwhelmed all others. Then came a great sympathy for Twisted Jimmy Martin, who sat huddled before me, with his broad shoulders sagging and his head bent forward and drooping; and after that, and as poignant as any sorry thrust of fate, my failure to accomplish the hopes of the man who had so strangely trusted me with not only his gold, but his honor, Monsieur Périgord. In that moment the loss sustained by Jimmy Martin, or my own, seemed not so great; for in the mental blackness that overshadowed the tropical day and the placid sea, the brilliant sunlight and the certainty of life prolonged, I could imagine the exile's grief now that his last hope was swept away. We could live with hope, and begin again, whereas he had staked all upon our success. His was the greatest tragedy of all. And upon him would fall the heaviest blow.

Slowly, as the afternoon progressed, the land toward

which we moved grew less dim. Its mountains rose higher from the sea, became defined by proximity to sharpened blue lines, suggesting eternal shelter and security. The men shifted seats, and the new oarsmen pulled more vigorously. I became aware of their more hopeful comments. Their lives were beginning over again, and the past vicissitudes lost. We had escaped with our lives. Most of us had youth and the strength of youth. But one man aboard the boat had lost his life's work, and old Jimmy Martin was still sitting, absorbed, despondent, hopeless, when we caught a slowly moving wave, were rolled shorewards, and felt our keel grate on the sands of the beach. We stepped ashore, and stretched our cramped limbs on the earth of Martinique, that island which has passed into tragic fame. But a little walk around a friendly shoulder of land lay a tiny port of refuge, a village containing other and kindly men, and we who had survived had nothing physical to fear. We pulled our boats high and dry to certain security, and, in straggling procession, and directed by a ragged native fisherman, trudged away across the sands, while out there to the west, very flat and still, the waters swept languidly, as if loving that which they had clasped to themselves, my first real ship, the *Esperanza*.

CHAPTER XII

FORTUNATELY for us, we were but a short distance from a good-sized village, where it was possible to get cable connection. I found there also, by another strike of good fortune, a shipping agent who knew me and could identify me at the local bank, so that within a few hours our needs, so far as finances were concerned, were supplied. It was a discouraging prospect at the best, for the war had so disrupted all services that we might be there, practically marooned on the island, for a

period covering any time between one and six weeks. Personally, I continued to be as bitterly chagrined over the loss of Monsieur Périgord's gold as I was over the loss of my own ship. The *Esperanza* had paid for herself several times over, and I was far from being a poor man, as I knew by my own bank balances in New York; but the sentimental side of the mission I had undertaken and lost weighed heavily upon me.

I decided to lose no time in notifying Monsieur Périgord of our misfortune, and so, as soon as I had given all those dependent upon me ample money to provide for their needs, I went to the cable office. I found it in charge of a French cable officer, evidently a man from the reserve list or one who had been in retirement at the outbreak of the war, and was now serving his country in quasi-military capacity. I got a form and wrote my message, announcing the loss of the *Esperanza*, and stating that she had been submarine. I passed it through the little wicket to the girl clerk, who took it to the desk where the officer stood grimly erect, with his glasses perched down on the end of his nose, and he, after glancing at it, pursed his lips, readjusted his glasses, and then came over to the wicket.

"You are Captain Hale?" he asked in French; and when I said "Yes," he added: "I have heard of your misfortune, and am very sorry for you. I understand you were *en route* to my country?"

"To Bordeaux," I replied; "laden with cocoa and coffee."

"Then the misfortune is my country's as well as yours," he said, with a shake of his head.

He had been holding my cablegram in his hand as he talked in his kindly way, and now thrust it through the wicket to me.

"I am very sorry, Captain Hale, that I cannot permit this to be sent for you. We have been given rigid orders that the loss of any ship by German submarine attack can be reported to the French Government only, which,

if it deems it expedient, privately notifies the shipowners. In this case, you, being the owner of the vessel, require no notification."

"But, monsieur," I protested, "the *Esperanza* had a very valuable cargo on board, and it is of the utmost importance that I should immediately notify the shipper. He has private reasons for being particularly anxious concerning its delivery. Can you not urge upon your Admiralty the request that the news be given him?"

He shook his head doubtfully, and pointed to the address on the form.

"I fear, Captain Hale," he said, "that you, not being a Frenchman, will not understand quite what that name means to the French Government. You are not aware, perhaps, that at one time it was as well known as any name in France. Many have forgotten it; but probably not the Government. Under some circumstances it might notify an owner, but not, I am sure, where that owner is *persona non grata* in France."

I felt a hot impulse to defend Monsieur Périgord, and resolved to break the seals of silence imposed upon me in his behalf.

"Monsieur," I said, "is it possible for you to give me a little of your time in some place where we may talk privately? I have much to say to you concerning Monsieur Périgord that I feel it a duty to say."

"Certainly," he answered; "come this way." And he opened a door in the wire partition, and conducted me through into a small private office, where he gave me a chair.

"Monsieur Périgord is as loyal a Frenchman as lives," I said. "He is, himself, broken-hearted by his exile. The loss of the *Esperanza* is nothing; the loss of her cargo of cocoa and coffee is nothing, compared with what her real cargo consisted of."

He opened his eyes widely and looked at me inquiringly. "The real cargo of the *Esperanza* consisted of three

million dollars in gold, that Monsieur Hector de la Périgord, that aged, lonely old exile, had collected together and was sending across as a voluntary contribution to France. I myself was to take it from Bordeaux and deliver it to the Ministry of the Treasury."

The officer leaned back so suddenly that his glasses dropped from the top of his nose, and he fairly exploded a most expressive "*Mon Dieu* — fifteen million francs in gold, voluntarily, you said! And asking nothing in return!"

"Voluntarily, and asking nothing in return," I declared. "There was no proviso whatever connected with his gift. The one thing he did ask me to do for him, if I might, was, after his gift had been made and accepted, to gain for him the removal of that ban which exiles him. He is very old, monsieur, and his one inordinate love is for the land of his birth. He asked nothing more than the privilege of returning there that he might die on French soil. There are but few men, monsieur, who do not make grave mistakes and blunders in early youth; but when the fires of life grow old and dim and cold, there comes repentance, and it seems very godlike for their fellow men to forgive. I assure you that could I obtain that forgiveness from his country for poor old Hector Périgord I would devote but small grief to the loss of the *Esperanza*, although she was mine, was uninsured, and was my only ship. I beg you to accept my assurance that I am telling the truth concerning your exiled countryman, because he favored me with his confidence and trusted in me his hope. If you could see and talk to him, as I have, you would have pity. If those at the head of the French Government could know, as I do, the price he has paid for his one great mistake, his unfaltering loyalty to France, his recognition that she is far better off as a great republic than she could ever have been under the royalism of his youthful dreams, they, too, would forgive. He is very old and infirm. He could no longer lead were his old desire still alive. Surely it could not hurt France, in all her

greatness and nobility, to spare him grace for the little time that he has left, and the little room to hold him after he goes. Is it not possible for you, monsieur, to notify your Government of his attempted munificence, and then, aside from your official capacity, and as a gentleman of France who can sympathize with the love and craving that every true Frenchman has for his country, to make an appeal for the removal of that ban which prevents the old man from returning to his country? It is a very little thing to do, monsieur, but a very noble one. You would personally feel that you had been humane. I ask you as a favor to myself to give it your consideration."

Thinking that I had already taken too much of his time, and yet believing that I had stated sufficient to interest him in Monsieur Périgord, I got to my feet and bade him "Good-Day." But with an impulsiveness I had not expected of him, he too arose, stepped forward and clasped my hand almost violently, and declared:

"Captain Hale, it is not possible for me to put across the unfeeling cables the eloquence of your advocacy; but I tell you this, that I am touched and grieved! I, too, know the longing for France. I, too, have been homesick for her when on foreign service. I, too, am old. I shall break all official rules if necessary, and take the risk of incurring the displeasure of my superiors by doing my utmost in behalf of your friend. I shall do even more than that: I shall enlist the services and personal advocacy of one who is a friend of mine, and not without influence in our native land. That friend will, in person, reach and appeal to the President of France, himself. If I fail, it shall be through no lack of honest effort on my part. Furthermore, I should like to say to you, sir, that I admire you for the quality of your friendship."

I was almost embarrassed by the deferential manner in which he bowed me through the door, and went away with a somewhat lighter heart in the hope that at least a portion of my mission to France, and that by far

the most important to Monsieur Périgord, should not fail.

I was now come to another very sorrowful duty, that of finding poor Jimmy Martin, and doing what I could to encourage him and make him stop brooding over his great loss. I went back to the little hotel where we had taken rooms, and on inquiry was told that he was out in a little arbor overlooking the sea. I found him there, with his elbows on his knees, and his head resting in the palms of his hands, looking for all the world like a man hopelessly defeated. He seemed actually to have become old and shrunken in a few hours, and when, upon hearing my footsteps upon the gravel path, he lifted his head, I saw that his eyes were sunken and his face haggard and lined. I threw myself on the little rustic bench beside him with the feeling that anything I might say would be awkward and futile, but resolved, notwithstanding, to brace him up if possible.

“Jimmy,” I said, “it is pretty hard luck. There is no use in trying to gloss that over in the least; but to me it does n’t look so absolutely hopeless as you seem to think. The plans, of course, are gone, but surely you can make others?”

“Yes,” he said wearily, “I can. But you don’t understand what it means. Why, Tom, it might mean years of work. There were formulas so exact, and so fine, as to be utterly beyond the capacity of one’s memory, and some of which cost me probably ten thousand experiments. Those plans and papers you saw contained every detail, and there are details which I could no more recall than I could the figures in a book of logarithms.”

“Just the same,” I replied, “you don’t propose to give up, do you?”

He shook his head as if in doubt, with an air of the utmost despondency and discouragement.

“Come,” I said, “you are no quitter! Besides, as you know, I am fairly well off. I will back you with all the

money you want, if it is n't too much, and you can have all of the time you want."

He turned toward me almost angrily, and exclaimed: "Money — time! Don't you understand that both of these would be useless if the Germans succeeded in getting those plans? Humph! I should be robbed of my invention. It would be in public use before I could have gone halfway through with the work necessary to perfect the apparatus again, and it would be almost impossible for me even to prove that it was my invention. The probabilities are that my name would never appear on it as the inventor. For war use alone it is the most valuable find that has ever been made by man. With that invention a submarine would not need to come to the surface to find its prey and discharge its torpedoes. Or, on the other hand, a cruiser equipped with that apparatus could discover a submarine at any depth to which the latter could go, and by following it constantly and observing it, could ultimately destroy it. You are not fool enough to suppose that any country at war would hesitate to make use of such an invention as that without very many qualms of nicety as to the poor devil of an inventor."

"But," I insisted, "we are not even positive that the plans were ever delivered aboard the submarine. I think not."

"Well, then, what became of them? I believe you are just as certain as I am that it was those plans they were after rather than the mere sinking of the ship. They could n't have known about the gold. We both of us know that somebody aboard the *Esperanza*, whom we never suspected, was a spy, and that this spy, by some devilish means that we have no idea of, learnt the secret of my bench and took the plans out. We rushed in there together and saw it open and empty. We know absolutely that the German commander stripped us to our hides and examined us, and the search they made of our boat was so thorough that nothing the size of a pea could have

escaped discovery. The only reason I escaped at all was because of your cleverness in telling them the engineer was lost. They thought I was the second. I think they were really after me. You believed they were badly disappointed. I did not. I believe that was all bluff to make us think they had failed, but that, in the meantime, whoever stole those plans had turned them over. I believe those plans are right at this moment being carried as fast as that submarine can travel toward Germany. The first thing that will be heard of my invention by anybody will be that German submarines are known to have put in use a new method for sinking ships without ever appearing on the surface. It is a tragic loss, that's what it is! And what is more, it goes double with me, because my sympathies are all with the Allies, and to hell with Germany, say I! And here I have gone to work and spent my life perfecting something for those murderous cusses to use, not only against my friends, but possibly against my own countrymen. Humph! I would rather have died than perfected that thing and then let it fall into their hands."

He jumped to his feet and began pacing savagely to and fro in front of the arbor, kicking the gravel as if by physical action to vent his anger on something. I waited for him to cool down a ~~bit~~, and also because I found it difficult to say anything reassuring. After a time he paused and dropped back into his dejected attitude, leaning grimly against the doorpost of the arbor with both hands thrust into his pockets, and his head bent forward.

"Whom do you suspect?" I asked, looking up at him. "You think somebody delivered those plans. Well, if so, we can at least have the satisfaction of trying to find out who it was, and we can certainly make it hot for that gentleman; don't you doubt it?"

"Yes, and mighty small satisfaction that would be," he grunted derisively. "That would not bring the plans back and would not prevent the Germans from using them.

And they have got them. I am absolutely sure of it from the way that slick, oily, greasy commander grinned at us when he bade us 'Good-bye.' The man was exultant. What in the devil could he be exultant over if it was not that he had got the best of us? Answer me that, will you?"

He stopped and glared at me, and I, finding it rather impossible to offer any sane response, stood silent. He seemed almost to gloat over my inability to answer, and resumed his argument almost as if sneering at my being worsted.

"Besides, how are you going to find out who the thief was? It could not have been poor old Klein, because he is dead."

"But regardless of the thief," I insisted, "it looks to me as if you would be a fool not to start work again at the earliest moment."

He threw up his hands with a gesture of disdain, and exclaimed: "Good Lord, listen to the boy talking! 'Start to work' — as if he had any idea of the work involved. Have n't I made you understand yet that it took me more than thirty years of experiments to make that apparatus perfect? Do you think I shall live to be as old as Methusalem?"

It seemed rather hopeless to continue the debate. I was not quite certain that in his exasperation he might not fall upon me, as the nearest living object, and relieve his pent-up feelings by battering me to a pulp with his fists. He certainly looked angry enough, and capable enough, to perform such a task, which would have been highly unpleasant for myself. I thought perhaps it might be wise to divert his thoughts.

"I believe," I declared, "that dirty pup, Mike Cochrane, the oiler, must have had a finger in it. I know he was there on the end of the dock in Maracaibo the night we sailed. Do you suppose that, having himself failed to steal the plans, he succeeded in bribing some of the other men of the crew to make a try for them?"

“Why not?” he answered. “That’s just about the way most men show their gratitude. I kept you from murdering him and did n’t chuck him overboard myself. I kept you from putting him off at Samaña. I got you to carry him on to Maracaibo and turn him loose. I gave him money aboard the *Esperanza*, and one day when I met him with his crippled wing, there in the Plaza at Maracaibo, feeling sorry for him, I gave him a hundred dollars more. Good Lord! Have n’t I done enough for him to make him an enemy? The surest way in the world to make a man hate you is to do something for him.”

I saw that he had reverted to his old cynicism and distrust of humanity at large, but could not resist a parting shot at him.

“I suppose, then, that because I have tried to be decent to you, you hate me?”

It rather took the wind out of his sails, and he turned and gaped at me for a moment as if speechless.

“Good Heavens! No, Tom,” he exclaimed, “I am talking like a fool, but hang it all, I am hard hit. I am done. I am whipped. I am clean knocked out. I will take back everything I have said.”

Thinking that this was a pretty good point at which to drop the conversation, I got up and joined him in the doorway of the arbor.

“One thing is sure,” I said, “that we are not going to gain anything by brooding over something that is done and can’t be altered. Come on; let’s walk down toward the beach.”

We did so, and it was not the first walk that we were to take along the more or less deserted reaches of that shore; for on that day, and the day following, and the day after that, having nothing better to do, we trudged aimlessly backward and forward. Despite the physical beauty of the island it was a most deadly place in which to contemplate passing six weeks of waiting. The town itself afforded nothing in the way of amusement, and I

could offer but little in the way of conversation to brighten up the spirits of Twisted Jimmy, who threatened to develop melancholia. He grew more taciturn even as he drooped physically, and the worst of it was that it seemed impossible to offer him any substantial encouragement.

It was on the third day, in the afternoon, that we had taken a longer walk than usual toward the northernmost point of the island, and the tide was running in, when we discovered here and there on the white sands evidences of the ill-fated *Esperanza*. A life-belt with her name shining grimly, a broken stool, a section of deck plank, and some other little pieces, were scattered about on the white sands. A native beach-comber, who had been collecting salvage, dashed into the surf to recover some prize as we passed. Supposing that he was salving a mere piece of wreckage, we did not pause to watch his efforts, but continued our way. Jimmy, steadily walking, was staring absently ahead into the distance; but I, cherishing an affection for the faithful old *Esperanza*, looked back over my shoulder, idly speculating meanwhile as to what remnants had been spewed up by the sea. It was then I saw something which made me stop abruptly.

“What do you suppose he has got?” I said, turning fully around, and Jimmy whirled to look back, and exclaimed, “Dirty swine; come on, let’s get him,” and began running down the beach. There was no mistaking what the beach-comber had pulled ashore, nor what he had been doing; for he instantly raised himself and took to his heels with a speed which could easily outdistance the efforts of either Jimmy or myself. He had been rifling the pockets of a corpse, and that corpse was Klein, the engineer. Being somewhat more fleet of foot than Jimmy, I was the first to arrive. On the sand beside the body lay the articles which the ghoulish beach-comber had taken from the engineer’s pockets, and discarded as useless to him. There was a bunch of keys, a toothbrush, a pocket handkerchief, a ball of twine, a sodden packet of letters, and a big flat

packet of white papers. Upon these Jimmy fell with a shout, and carefully spread them open on the beach, regardless of the proximity of the dead man. There, clearly defined and unblurred by the water, being done in waterproof ink — were the missing plans. It was Klein, after all, for whom we had mourned, who was the thief. Germany had not secured that for which she had struggled so persistently, and Twisted Jimmy, on his hands and knees over the plans, suddenly lifted his head and laughed in a high, hysterical key.

CHAPTER XIII

OUR relief upon discovering that Klein was the thief who had made away with Martin's plans was very great; for there is scarcely a greater tragedy of the mind than mistrust of one's fellows, and I doubt if either Jimmy or I could have been entirely frank and free with our men had not proof of their innocence been so unexpectedly given us. Retribution in Klein's case had come swiftly, and in a most unexpected manner. The cause of his death was very apparent, for the whole back of his head was crushed in as if by some flying fragment of metal hurled by the explosion of the torpedo that had sent the *Esperanza* so swiftly to the bottom. It was, of course, impossible to conjecture in what portion of the ship he had been at the time of the explosion; but it was quite certain that he had not been seen in the engine-room. He was the only man who had gone to his death. It was necessary for us to perform the rather gruesome task of searching his body for other evidences, which we did thoroughly, one of us in the meantime keeping watch lest some intruder discover us and put us in awkward situation with the authorities, who must be notified with due regard to coroner's investigations. We found nothing whatever of an incriminating nature and were placing the sodden

letters and personal belongings back in his pocket when Jimmy called attention to what was apparently a Roman Catholic scapular suspended in the customary manner around the dead man's neck by a black tape. Honoring the reverence due to the dead man's religion, I was in the act of tucking the scapular into position when Jimmy, with what I thought a most callous disregard for the proprieties, stooped forward, caught the braid in his hand, and with a wrench broke it away from the dead man's neck.

"Don't do that, Jimmy," I expostulated. "He had at least a right to his religion."

"Religion nothing," Jimmy snorted contemptuously. "He was no Catholic, I know, because I am one myself, and had to shut him up one day for his blasphemy against my religion. This looks like a scapular all right, but it is n't; or if so he had no business wearing it. If I am making a mistake, may the Holy Saints forgive me!"

He crossed himself, then took his clasp-knife from his pocket, and ripped the edges of the tiny black case and withdrew therefrom a curious little square of silk embroidered with a yellow cipher. He stood with it in his hand, nonplussed; but I took it from him, striving vainly to remember where I had seen identically such a square once before. Of a sudden my memory responded.

"That," I said to Jimmy, "is the final proof! And the odd part of it is that Klein was no ordinary, casual spy; but actually a permanent secret service agent on the Prussian staff. I saw one of these once before, in Plymouth, since the war broke out. It was shown me as a curiosity by a friend of mine who is a high officer in the British Navy. With that little square of silk Klein could have gone aboard any German ship and made demands instead of requests. He could have gone anywhere in Germany with that as his sole passport."

"It proves another thing, too," said Jimmy. "That the people who employed this man were not only pretty high up, but knew a whole lot more of what I was trying

to do than I had any idea anybody on earth could have guessed."

"They certainly took no chances," I added, "because the fact that they selected a man of such importance for the job shows that they were not gunning for an elephant with a mosquito gun. All the other chaps were probably mere subsidiaries; but in any event they were determined to watch you to the last minute, and catch you at the moment when your invention was perfected."

"But if that is so," declared Jimmy, "they must have been mighty badly misinformed, or else somebody bungled! Otherwise they would not have made an attempt in New York Harbor, which thereby put us on guard, and again, they would not have employed Cochrane to try to nip the incomplete plans before we reached Maracaibo. You see they really were not completed until three or four nights ago."

"It seems to me that Klein must have been playing a lone hand and unaware of the possible interference of other men," I reasoned; "for his method would have been to allay all suspicion and to keep actual tab on your work until he was fairly sure you were at the goal, when he trusted to opportunity to enable him to clean the whole thing up in one reckless dash. It is probable that he was immensely annoyed by the efforts made in New York Harbor, and again by Cochrane, both of which seriously upset his own plans of campaign."

"Perhaps that's true," he agreed, and proceeded to cut open the other little square of black. Inside it was some thin paper, too wet to be extracted without its destruction, so Jimmy forbore, thrust it into his pocket and said, "We'd best go now and notify the authorities that there is a dead man on the beach."

Without much difficulty we found a man to whom we made our report and gave our names and addresses, knowing that we should be called upon as witnesses at the inquest, and then headed straight for Jimmy's rooms

at the hotel, where, with the utmost pains, we extracted the piece of paper that had baffled us on the beach. We cut it carefully away, immersed it in a wash-basin of clean water, and by exercising infinite care got it straightened out almost intact. There were evidences of writing on it in lead pencil, but with the paper wet through these marks were totally indecipherable and meaningless; so we were again compelled to have patience, and solved this problem by going out and buying a pane of glass, spreading the wet sheet of paper on it and drying it in the sun. We were interrupted in our detective work by a call from an island official and had to attend the inquest. It was rather long, official, and tedious, and it was late in the afternoon when we returned to Jimmy's room. The paper was now thoroughly dry, but to our annoyance was still illegible. We put it away in a safe place and began a search through the shops of the town to purchase either a powerful reading-glass or a microscope. We succeeded in finding, at length, a fair magnifying-glass and hurriedly returned to the hotel. We lost no time in applying it to that troublesome piece of paper, and almost instantly the words, broken, faint, and illegible, came to view. They were:

“The — was made by — and recep — left front leg — press knot — right cor — top — than — opens with spring.”

It was plainly the instructions how to open the secret receptacle in Jimmy's laboratory, and was, therefore, proof that no precautions had been overlooked by the secret agent and his subordinates. It made it definitely certain, also, that he had been assisted in New York by some one who had found it necessary to convey the news to him in writing, because had he himself made a memorandum there would have been no need for him to have filled in the name of the maker. Thus another point which had been obscure was cleared up; for now we knew that Klein had been in possession of Jimmy's secret pre-

vious to the time he had signed on as engineer aboard the *Esperanza*.

Together we reasoned it out that Klein and his assistants had kept Jimmy under constant espionage for a long time, and it was not unlikely that even our conversation in the restaurant on that night when Jimmy had first given me his confidence had been overheard and reported. Probably from that hour onward there was never a moment ashore, be he awake or asleep, when Jimmy's every movement was not noted. Then Klein had decided to take no risk whatever of Jimmy's escaping him, and so, having at some period of his life been a very competent marine engineer, had forged his papers, giving himself a clean record of constant employment, and thus made his way into the engine-room staff of the *Esperanza*.

In the long, idle days that followed, when we were as helpless as any men very well could be, Jimmy's spirits seemed to revive to their accustomed pitch. The certainty that his secret had not been stolen from him, and that all plans and memoranda were in his possession, which would enable him to resume work as soon as we could get away from the island, were sufficient in themselves to render him cheerful, although vastly impatient.

It seemed to me that I had come to know every inhabitant of that island, had exhausted every place of interest and grown tired of hoping, in the twenty-two days which we actually endured before anything bearing either sail or smoke came in; and then, very early one morning, Jimmy came jubilantly thumping on my door and shouted: "A ship! There's a ship blew into harbor last night. Hurry up, show a leg."

He had no need to arouse me with that old-time phrase of the sea, because my feet had struck the floor, and I was leaping into my clothes before he had halfway finished his sentence. I was at that stage of desperation where I would willingly have embarked upon anything that could carry me away from that island. We hastened down to

the beach to find out who she was, and learned that she was a little tramp schooner with an auxiliary engine which plied independently up and down the Windward, Leeward, and Lesser Antilles; also that she would probably be in port at least two days, which seemed a very long time to men who were so eager to get away. She was bound for Barbados, that, while not altogether in the direction we should have chosen, would, at least, insure our finding a passage more speedily on some commodious packet bound either northward or southward. We returned to the hotel and had breakfast, after which we sent out a runner and had all members of the old *Esperanza*'s crew assembled where we lodged and asked the men their individual wishes, and before noon that day knew that all, without exception, were as well "fed-up" with the islands as we were and would gladly avail themselves of the chance to get away from it. I therefore sought the skipper of the *Reina del Mar* — for under this pretentious name that dingy little wind-jammer sailed — and surprised him by offering him such a passenger list. He threw up his hands in a Spanish gesture and said that while I honored him with my patronage he thought it would be almost impossible to entertain twenty-four men aboard a schooner whose own crew consisted of but eight men, and it took a vast amount of persuasion to get him to undertake the task. We solved it by agreeing to stop on deck in watches and take our own chances of a drenching; for we were resolved not to pass further time on the island if it could be avoided.

Looking back over the difficulties and trials that we endured about that time, I recall with a smile how fortunate it was, after all, that what seemed to me the hardship of having to wait two days to go aboard the *Queen of the Sea*, turned out as it did; for on the very morning of the day we were due to sail a messenger came hurrying from the cable office requesting my presence immediately. Wondering what new obstacle could have been

put in my way, and somewhat "grumpy," I responded. The gray-haired reserve officer in charge of the cable office, with whom I had become somewhat friendly, took me for the second time into his little private apartment, and I noted that his air was one of great exultation.

"Captain Hale," he said, eager to impart his news, "I have something which I am certain will give you as much delight as it does me; for you have been the active agent in securing justice for a much-misunderstood countryman of mine. I have the extreme satisfaction to tell you that the unfortunate and so-long-misguided man, Monsieur Hector de la Périgord, has been granted amnesty. In recompense for the splendid and munificent attempt he made to be of service to France, the French Government has not only given him an unqualified pardon, but the President himself has further honored him by a message of thanks."

He stood beaming at me as if overjoyed by the success of his efforts; but said nothing whatever of the part he had played in the entire affair. To me there could come no more gratifying news, for that I had so disastrously failed in delivering Monsieur Périgord's gold was now offset by the certain knowledge that I had rendered him a service of value. I had thought and brooded over it so much that I was actually as happy as if the pardon had been for myself. We stood smiling like a pair of successful conspirators.

"But, monsieur," I said, "it is to you that the credit is due; for alone I could have done nothing. I did no more than tell you the truth concerning one who is old and sorely distressed, whereas you risked your official position to send his appeal across the wires."

He shrugged his shoulders, but, still smiling happily, turned to his desk and took up some papers, which he held in his hands as he replied. "What I did," he said, "is merely what one Frenchman would do for another. I tried to be, as you said that day when you told me the

truth of this affair, not only a Frenchman, but one who had an opportunity to perform a kindly act. I did not tell you at the time that it was to my own brother I should appeal, and that he is a man of a most prominent position in France. I do not know what difficulties he has had to overcome, or what efforts he has been compelled to make; but, Monsieur Hale, all that does n't matter. It is results that count. We have them here."

He tapped the papers suggestively and then, as if amused and yet not unashamed, exclaimed: "After all, what a lot of children we Frenchmen are! Sentiment! Always sentiment. There are tears in the eyes of our *poilus* sometimes when they fight. We go into ecstatic extravagances over trivial things, although we have, thank God, the ability to shut our teeth quite grimly and die when graver exigencies arise. No man of France ever forgives halfway. No man of France is ever enlisted in any enterprise in which he does not plunge as unreservedly as it is possible for any human being to plunge. And, monsieur, I have here before me an unusual proof of how far the France of a Frenchman can go when once sentiment is involved. Something I said in my numerous messages may possibly have had influence, but here it is."

Again he turned to the papers which he had bound together with a clip, and said: "If you wish, it is to you that the privilege is given of conveying the news to Monsieur Périgord that all his citizenship and all his honor have been restored, and that a welcome worthy of such a man awaits him in France. Already he has been notified of the loss of his gold through the sinking of your ship, but news of his pardon has been withheld, both courtesy and kindness deeming it best that the conveyance of his pardon be through you. This, I am told, is to be your reward. For, being an American, those who knew of the part you have played believed that you would not care for the baubles of decoration so much as you would for the opportunity of telling Monsieur Périgord person-

ally that your mission was not a failure. It is all very unofficial as far as documents go, because we are unfortunately, at the present time, without that easy communication by mail which prevails in time of peace; but I am privately informed that the first mail which reaches Maracaibo will include an official letter to Monsieur Périgord that will end his exile, as well as bestow upon him the grateful thanks of the French Government for what he attempted to do."

He folded the papers, and placed them in an official envelope.

"Do you care to undertake the mission?" he asked, holding it toward me. "If so, these are copies of the messages which will confirm the news you carry. Official confirmation, as I said before, will come by the first available mail."

It is not given to every man in his life to convey news of great import and joy to a fellow being, and suddenly a vivid picture of Monsieur Périgord as I had last seen him came to my vision. I reached forward impulsively and seized the envelope from his hand, and thrust it into my pocket.

"Will I undertake it, monsieur?" I asked. "Of course I shall. I would rather be the bearer of this packet than any other in the world!"

CHAPTER XIV

VERILY the *Reina del Mar*, when she poked her nose out of the harbor, her little auxiliary engine puffing pretentiously until she could get to the offshore breeze and hoist her dingy sails, was a sight. So small was she that her deck space was crowded with the men of the *Esperanza* as well as her own crew. Forgetting their troubles and vicissitudes now that a ship was again beneath their feet, the men insisted on falling to and lending

a hand. Some of them were real sailors and had served aboard sailing ships, and one of them roared an old chanty as they brought the mainsail taut. They proceeded, like a lot of schoolboys on a lark, to clean the dingy old tub, as probably she had never been cleaned before. I am not quite certain that the skipper of this disreputable craft was pleased with this evidence of cleanliness, nor do I think his own crew were in the least appreciative, fearing that an example would be set that their skipper would condemn them to follow.

Again the weather favored us, which under the circumstances was not the least gratifying portion of our situation, because, sleeping on the deck as we did, had the seas made at all, we should have been wet through to our hides for twenty-four hours out of each twenty-four. We could make no plans whatever until we learned what Barbados might have in store for us, but were all relieved to get away from the island and the scene of our disaster. And so, with fair weather, more or less cheerful spirits, and constantly favoring winds, we blew into the port of Barbados, where we were welcomed as befitting shipwrecked men, not only by the wondering inhabitants, but also by two tramp steamers flying the British flag, which were anchored there. I paid the fat, greasy skipper of the *Reina del Mar*, who, I learned later, promptly went ashore to jubilate over his good fortune, and so hilariously did he celebrate that nothing save the fact that he was well known prevented him from ending his carousal in the *carcel*. My own men, being discreet, and, as a whole, very abstemious, sought various quarters, and later reported to me at the hotel where Jim and I found lodgings. Jim and I immediately went to the port authorities, where we were received with the utmost courtesy and sympathy.

"We heard of your misfortune, Captain Hale, by private advices from the British Admiralty," said the British official, "and in view of the circumstances that you were bound for an Allied port with supplies, we are instructed

to place ourselves at your disposal. Now what can we do for you?"

"Nothing whatever in the financial way, thank you, sir," I replied, and I fancied he was much relieved, although somewhat astonished. "I suppose," I added, smiling a little at his puzzled look, "that there have been in the history of shipwrecked mariners but few such crews as mine; for I don't believe there is a man of them but is comfortably fixed so far as money is concerned and from a sailor's viewpoint. I think that most of my men will ask nothing more of you than the opportunity to secure a passage aboard some ship bound for a United States port. As for me, I must make my way to Maracaibo."

"And I also," announced Jimmy, thus for the first time letting me know that he had determined to accompany me.

"The shipment of your crew to an American port," said the official, "presents no difficulty whatever, for the day after to-morrow one of the ships you doubtless saw as you came into the harbor sails for Charleston, South Carolina. As for passages for you and your chief engineer to Maracaibo, that is a different matter. There has been no ship from here in that direction for nearly a month."

Jim and I exchanged troubled glances, and I wondered whether it might not prove more expedient for us also to turn northward in the hope sooner to find a passage to the Venezuelan port; but the Englishman, as if to reassure us, said: "Oh, the fact that there has been no ship in such a long time is decidedly in your favor. There is scarcely any doubt at all that within a few days somebody will come along bound westward."

Eager as I was to get to Maracaibo and to avoid a long sojourn in Barbados, it seemed but sensible to follow the port officer's suggestion and wait. We passed nearly an hour in his office, answering questions concerning the sinking of the *Esperanza*, after which he was so kind as to accompany us to the harbor-master's office, where we found the master of the freighter *Port Royal*, and had

no trouble at all in concluding arrangements for the passage of our men to Charleston. I could have arranged for a portion of them to have worked their passage, but, remembering all the loyalty and service they had given me, I purchased their transportation for a comparatively small lump sum, based upon the actual cost of carrying them, and inasmuch as it threatened to be the last service I could ever do them, arranged that they should go home as passengers. They were to go aboard the Port Royal at ten o'clock the following morning, so Jim and I strolled through the town until we found one of the men, and directed him to notify all the others immediately of the arrangements made for them. That night Jim and I had but finished our evening meal when we were waited upon by the crew in a body, with the boatswain as the appointed spokesman. He looked more awkward than I had ever seen him, and proceeded to declare that the men wished it to be understood that they still held themselves at my service. At this expression of friendship I think I felt nearly as awkward as he did. I told them that my future plans were very uncertain.

"But you will be going to sea again, sir, in another ship," insisted the boatswain, "because you can't keep away from it, sir, and the men say they would rather loaf ashore for a time if there is any chance of their getting to serve under you."

It was quite useless for me to emphasize the uncertainty of my plans, and so a compromise was effected, whereby each man would leave an address for me in New York where he could be found. At the time I thought this a most useless proceeding, but later was very grateful for the fact. The men departed, and later in the evening the officers came, and with the liberty of shipmates ashore without a ship, it was more like the breaking-up of a family party than a definite parting. They, too, announced a determination to wait ashore for a while, and spoke hopefully of our being together again.

"Never fear, sir, you will not be able to keep away from the sea," said Rogers, my chief mate, as they were making their departure. "You will go, either in a ship of your own or in command of one belonging to some other owner, and we will all be on board. We have been talking about this ever since the day we landed on the beach in Martinique. The *Esperanza*, God bless her old bones! was a happy ship, and we shared some pretty lively runs. We all stuck together then, and got so in the habit of being together that there is not a man jack aboard the *Esperanza* who does n't hate the idea of breaking up."

I did n't share his confidence that we should all be together again, but was very much overcome by the manifestation of friendship, that happens very rarely among wanderers of the sea. Usually the breaking-up of a ship's crew consists of nothing more than a hand-shake here and there, occasionally a "Well, wish you luck, matey," or, "Good-bye, skipper," and that is the end of it. If such men ever meet again, it is by sheer chance, for but rarely do they write.

Neither Twisted Jimmy nor I could resist the temptation to go down and see the men embark on the following morning. They stood in a group, with their scant belongings, bought since their others were lost, scattered about their feet. They were in an unfrequented portion of the dock, and were talking volubly when they saw us, but fell to silence. They greeted both Jimmy and me with a rather boisterous "Good-morning," and began looking at the chief mate, as if expecting him to say something upon which they had agreed. He cleared his throat with a loud "Ahem" as a preliminary, and the men gathered closer around us.

"Captain Hale, sir," he said, "after we left you last night, the men came around to where we were stopping, and we held a long talk. The men say, sir, that possibly you have had more bad luck than they know about, and perhaps have n't money enough to buy another boat.

Most of them have saved all the money you gave them, and want me to tell you that if they can help you to buy a ship, you are welcome to all they have. Perhaps if you formed a little stock company, that would be the best way. You need not be afraid, sir, that any of us would get lippy, and act as if we were the owners when we went to sea again. We would all be just as we have been."

He paused, and as all of them had been waiting the opportunity to talk, they proceeded to talk at once in chorus, the "bosun" having a little bit the better of it, because his voice was the strongest.

"Almost money enough to buy a ship with, sir," he shouted. "We would rather do that if you are busted, and give you a half ownership. They would like to have you do it, because they have never had a chance before, sir, to show you how much they like you."

"The best skipper that ever took a ship to sea," roared another voice from the rear, and with more or less profane emphasis they agreed in unison.

I did n't quite see what I had ever done to merit such friendship, except that I had tried to be just and fair with them all, which was a very easy matter; because they had, from the start, been the most carefully selected crew with which I had ever sailed, and those who had not thoroughly fitted in had been, with equal care, weeded out, and replaced, until they came to work like a perfectly running machine. But I could give no promise for the future, and could only assure them that they should hear from me as soon as I returned to the United States. I did n't tell them I had money enough of my own to buy a ship, nor do I suppose they understood the amount of profit the *Esperanza* had given me in her desperate service. Yet, somehow, I felt a much more wealthy man after we saw the *Port Royal* get under way, and heard their final cheer from her deck, where they clustered and waved their hands as long as we were in sight.

In their enthusiasm they had not forgotten to include old Jimmy, to whom they irreverently referred as "Old Cock," and a few other pet names, which he had to bear, but which, I think, he rather liked. When we walked away from the wharf toward our hotel we did so rather silently, neither of us, I fancy, caring to discuss what had been a rather sentimental parting; but we were both, I am sure, depressed by the certainty that the *Esperanza*, with all her associations, was dead and done for.

The harbor-master's prediction that we should not have to wait long was rather quickly verified, for just five days later Jimmy and I went aboard a three-thousand-ton steamer bound for Maracaibo, upon which we were given comfortable quarters and much good-fellowship. The voyage was quite an easy and uneventful one, and again we were in Maracaibo, thinking how impossible it seemed that we had so recently left there, and that days, rather than months, had elapsed since the old *Esperanza*, freighted with gold, turned out to meet her fate. Jimmy took our scanty luggage to the hotel, where he was to engage rooms for us, and I lost no time in going to my friend, Farnes, the agent, to learn the news.

He was sitting in his habitual attitude, with his feet on the desk, smoking what might have been the same cigar as the one I last saw in his mouth. That man had a strange faculty for always appearing to puff at a cigar that was just half burned. I can scarcely recall his ever having lighted one or thrown one away that was consumed. It was just a perpetual half-cigar.

"Why, bless me, it's Captain Hale!" he exclaimed, bringing his feet down with a thump, and jumped up to shake hands. "So they got you, did they? I was afraid they would. Pretty tough luck; must have been a good fight you made with those guns I saw aboard."

"Good fight! That bounder you bought them from gave us a lot of dud ammunition, and not a shell that would explode. Half of them would n't fire at all. We

did n't have a chance. If I could get that swine by the neck — ”

“Hold on a minute,” he declared, interrupting me, and throwing up his hand in protest; “that sounds rather funny to me. The chap I bought that ammunition from is a pretty good friend of mine, and I put it up to him, hard, to see that the stuff was all right. He is a good artilleryman himself, and personally selected the whole lot, and personally inspected the whole lot, and made tests to be sure. I don't know much about these things, but I would bet ten to one that if the stuff was n't right it was because it was tampered with after it was put aboard your ship. I am going to have a talk with him about that.”

“I wish you would,” I said significantly. “There are a few things I am curious to have explained. By the way, have you seen a man around here with one arm in a sling?”

“Yes. Cochrane is his name, is n't it? A fellow that was aboard the *Esperanza* with you? He is still here, or was a few days ago.”

I shut my teeth and promised myself that Mike Cochrane and I would have a very interesting interview the moment I could get hold of him in a suitable place. I told Farnes I should like to learn where Cochrane was lodging without the latter's knowing it, lest he be put on guard, and dismissed the subject for the time being. It was on my lips to ask concerning Monsieur Périgord, when he volunteered the information, with a grave shake of his head.

“I am afraid that you have come none too soon to say ‘Good-bye’ to your old Frenchman,” he said, “who, by the way, seemed to have taken a great fancy to you. Funny old cove! Not a bad sort, though. Looks as though he was going to peg out. They say he has been mighty ill for the last week or ten days. Maybe a little longer than that. Come to think of it, he was taken down

just about the time we got the news that the *Esperanza* had been subbed."

"Oh, that is public, is it?" I asked.

"Not at all; indeed, I doubt if any others besides Monsieur Périgord, who told me confidentially, and possibly the German spies with which every place seems to be infested, know anything about it; but old Périgord took it terribly to heart for some reason, although why he should worry over a ship and a cargo that did n't concern him beats me. The old fellow seemed to crumple up all of a sudden as if his props had been knocked from under him. Shut himself up in his house, and sort of shriveled and withered. I have been up to see him; but he sits with his chin on his breastbone, his eyes about as blank as the wall over there, and half the time does n't know what you are saying to him. Acts to me as if he were tired of living and anxious to croak. I had to give him up as a bad job, because I could n't interest him in anything, and I got tired of talking to a man who sits and perpetually drums with his fingers on anything that happens to be near, as if wishing his visitor would cut it short and trundle his hoop. I heard the other day that he has been bad for the last week or two, and that all his house servants are running around in carpet slippers. Sounds to me as if the old chap was about to knock on the pearly gates. Sorry! Not a bad sort, old Périgord!" He looked at his watch, and then, as if remembering something, said: "By Jove! Did n't have any idea it was so late. Time for dinner. Can you come up with me? I have one guest, so my wife won't be put out if she has another one. Come along."

I thanked him and declined, giving as an excuse that I had promised to meet Jimmy, and that the engineer would be worried if I did n't appear. We parted in front of his office, and I sauntered away toward the hotel, thinking of many things. The news concerning Monsieur Périgord had driven from my mind the hope of solving the treachery

which had cost the Esperanza her life, for I was convinced that had those guns and ammunition proved effective she could have defended herself against any submarine that ever went afloat. I was so perturbed that I was feverishly anxious to carry my good news to Monsieur Périgord before it proved too late. It was very clear to me that the old exile had so builded on hope that the report of my misfortune had dealt him the finishing stroke. He had indulged in a great dream, had been willing to pay for its fulfillment, and the news of the failure of his enterprise had been the last blow. Fate had dealt unkindly with him throughout his life, and to him it must have seemed that his every endeavor was useless, and that he was doomed to suffer disappointment to the end.

Twisted Jimmy was waiting for me at the hotel. I found him sitting at one of the little marble-topped tables on the pavement in front of the entrance, absorbed in drawing lines upon it with a lead pencil, each of which he carefully altered and erased with a forefinger dipped into a glass of beer. So engrossed was he on some problem that when I sat down beside him he grunted impatiently, "Just a minute," and fell to ciphering on what appeared to be some prodigious arithmetical problem. I ordered the only non-poisonous and stimulating drink possible to obtain in the tropics, a long Ron Bacardi, and sat idly clinking the ice with a somewhat battered spoon until he finished.

"One has to guard against abnormalities of refraction," he said, "so that one may gain clear retinal formation of visage. The retinas of human eyes are as infinite in variety as the sands of the sea. So it is necessary to strike the medium, or converge the capacity and thus to —"

"How about the rooms?" I asked. "Are they comfortable, and are the beds long, or those short kind in which a man has to curl up like a caterpillar in order to get a rest?"

He looked up at me as if slightly bewildered, or some-

what annoyed that I should interrupt his technical discourse. Then, putting his fingers in his glass, he carefully erased his computations.

“Beds? Beds? Oh, yes, you mean where we are to sleep? Good Lord! I forgot all about them. The fact is — er — er — that I did n’t even look at them. I told the man at the desk, I believe, that I wanted two rooms, and he said he had them.”

“How about a bath?” I asked.

“Oh, I forgot all about that; but it does n’t matter,” he replied, with an airy wave of his hand, as if dismissing a trivial subject. But he followed after me when I went to the desk and perfected the inadequate arrangements he had made.

He was still so absorbed in some new line of calculation that he was not only an uncongenial companion when we dined, but I doubt if he was more than half aware of what I said when I told him I was going to visit Monsieur Périgord.

The dusk had fallen and the electric lights were throwing a noisy glare of light over the pavements, which were now crowded with chattering loiterers, when I left him. He had again possessed himself of a little marble-topped table and was busily disfiguring it, much to the annoyance of a waiter who stood behind him. The band over in the Plaza had opened its regular evening programme with a Sousa march, in which the trombones seemed to have the principal part, and the never-ending parade of would-be swains had begun its chattering, slant-eyed course. It was the old, familiar scene, without alteration or improvement. Everything was unchanged as I turned up the long street that would lead me to Monsieur Périgord’s home. The moon was the same, the still palm trees shining in its light were the same. It might have been the same evening in which I had parted from Monsieur Périgord. This little world had continued, while I had sailed eastward, fought a battle, lost a ship, lost a fortune, been marooned on

an island, discovered that I had been betrayed by a man I trusted, learnt that one portion of my mission was finished, succeeded in another, and now, after much traveling, was returning to convey my news. Nobody in this little world had the slightest interest in me, and I had not the slightest interest in any of them. All that I cared for, and the only concern I had, was to reach a very desolate old man who had trusted me, who had enlisted my personal support and admiration, and to whom I had the hope of carrying very brave tidings.

CHAPTER XV

THE mansion of Monsieur Périgord seemed to have partaken of its owner's misery, and was vastly different from the one I had left on that night when I bade him "Good-bye." Not a light shone from any window, nor from the two road-lamps at the entrance to the drive. As I came to the entrance I found the door closed, and from within came no sounds of occupancy. I fumbled for the push-button of the bell, and at first pressed very lightly, fearing lest it might disturb the sick man by its clamor, and then, receiving no response, pressed it more firmly. Surmising at last that the bell had been disconnected, I rapped on the door, and again nothing responded save the hollow echoes created by my own thumping. Had I not been certain from what Farnes had told me that Monsieur Périgord was within, I should have concluded that the house was deserted and made my way back to the hotel. Finding that all my efforts to attract attention to the main entrance were useless, I returned to the graveled roadway and reconnoitred in the gloom for some means of reaching a back door. The night was dark but for the stars, which seemed to add to the gloom of the path and shrubbery surrounding the big mansion. I traversed many walks that led me astray, sometimes to a summer

arbor, sometimes to a mere grassy plot with a rustic bench, and once I took the wrong turning in an exceptionally dark spot, and scratched my hands and face, and tore my clothes on a thorny bush before I succeeded in extricating myself. It took me a full half-hour of this nocturnal exploration to find the walk that eventually led me to what was apparently a servants' private entrance, and there a light shone through a transom. Again I rapped, perhaps with less caution, so intent was I on gaining admittance, and the door opened with an almost startling vehemence and a voice whispered, harshly, in Spanish:

“For the love of the Virgin! Can’t you come in without making a noise like an earthquake? Do you want to kill the *padrone*? ”

The gray-headed old footman whom I had seen on my previous visit stood bending fiercely toward me, and as I stepped to where the dim light fell upon my face, he drew back with a startled exclamation.

“I beg your pardon,” he said; “I thought it was one of those careless servants. What do you wish? ”

“I tried to gain entrance by the front door,” I said, “because it is very necessary that I should see Monsieur Périgord.”

The footman reached to the side of the door and switched on the electric light above the entrance, exposing me to its full glare. Again he peered forward, scowling at me from beneath his bushy eyebrows. He threw up his hands.

“Ah, you are the American captain, the friend of Monsieur Périgord!” He bowed with the utmost respect, as if to make amends for his churlishness. “You are the only living man beside the doctor who I believe I am entitled to admit, and my instructions do not cover you. I shall take the responsibility upon myself, despite the doctor’s orders. I do not believe in doctors. They can cure ills of the body, but not of the mind, and *por Dios*,

señor, it is a doctor for the mind that my master needs. He dies for want of something which no one can understand. It is as if he willed it, and was intent upon rest. Ah! I have kept you waiting outside, and it is not fitting that you, the *padrone's* friend, should enter through the servants' entrance. If you will return to the front I will unbar the door."

But I had no desire to travel over those shrub-strewn paths again, and insisted that my dignity would not be offended by passing through the servants' entrance any more than it would be gratified by coming in through the main hallway, whereupon, with an air of reluctance, the old fellow closed and fastened the door behind me. Through many passages and many turnings he conducted me, as through a maze, until I found myself in the *patio*, which was now dark and still. It, also, was very unlike the place where I had been entertained on that night when Monsieur Périgord honored me with his confidence. It was quite like a place of death now that the subdued lights were all extinguished, and the huge fountain black and still. The old Spaniard paused irresolutely, as if thinking over something, and turned to me for advice, mumbling his perplexity in a low undertone:

"Monsieur Périgord refuses to go to bed. For two days he has rested on a couch in his library. He is sunken in some strange, brooding lethargy. He does n't look up when I enter. Sometimes he does n't hear me speak. Nothing interests him, not even his food. He does not read. Does nothing but think, think, think. You, señor, his friend, are a man of intelligence, and understand more of such matters than I, who am but a servant, a very old, ignorant man, who knows but little save a great love for one who has been not only master, but protector, for more than forty years. So I beg you to advise me. Is it better that I go in and announce you, or is it not possible that the surprise and shock of seeing you, his friend, would act as a medicine; better than that which comes from the

chemist, and stir up the embers of a mind that threatens to die? Would it cure him, señor, or would it kill him?"

He had turned and clutched the lapel of my coat in his anxiety, and had bent forward again as if to discern my face in the darkness. It was rather a grave responsibility, it struck me, that was thus thrust upon me, and for once I was lacking in decision. I had heard of cases where a shock had been efficacious, and believed that I knew better than any other man living the cause of Monsieur Périgord's decline. Perhaps my impatience had something to do with my reply:

"It is certain he will die if he keeps on in this way, and I bring him good news. I believe there is an old saying that joy never kills. I will go with you to him."

The old fellow, without a word, released his hold on my coat, led the way across the *patio*, through the hallway, and to a door, upon which he tapped. A tired voice bade us enter, and we stepped inside. Monsieur Périgord was no longer on his couch, but was settled into the depths of a huge leather chair with his hands folded in front of him, and his legs sprawled toward the fireplace, in which, despite the warmth of the night, a tiny blaze was burning. He did not lift his eyes as we entered, nor seemed aware that his servant had brought a visitor. The servant nudged me to speech.

"Monsieur Périgord," I said, almost recklessly, "I have returned," — and stepped across the intervening space until I was close to his chair. He started like one aroused from sleep, lifted his eyes, and for a moment stared at me in bewilderment. I feared he had not recognized me, and then his eyes flashed with something of the old fire. He jerked his legs back, sat stiffly erect, and almost tottered to his feet, supporting himself with one hand on the arm of the chair, and for what seemed a long time stood with his lips parted as if to reassure himself that he was not dreaming.

"Hale! Captain Hale!" He almost fell forward as he

attempted to take my hand in both of his, and his servant, alarmed, sprang forward and assisted his master to a seat, after which he nimbly got a large decanter from a cabinet, poured a tiny glass of some stimulant, and held it to Monsieur Périgord's lips. He hovered solicitously above the latter, watched him drink it, replaced the glass, and stood blinking as if anticipating either death or a cure by some marvel about to be performed. Then reading some new look of interest on his master's face, he smiled with quiet satisfaction and fell to rubbing his hands.

"Juan, damn you, stop kneading your fists! You are not a baker!" exclaimed Monsieur Périgord testily; and at this his footman was almost transported with delight, clucked his tongue dryly between his teeth, looked across at me, and shook his bald old head as if thoroughly satisfied with the results thus far attained by my unexpected visit.

"He is better, señor, already; better, I tell you. Out there in the *patio* you said you would come unannounced, and — doctors are no good — no good, I tell you, señor. I will —"

Monsieur Périgord had been staring at him with a look of amazement, as if suddenly convinced that his servitor of forty years had gone insane, and now interrupted with a "There! There! Juan. Pull a seat up for Captain Hale, and leave us."

The faithful Juan was still chuckling in self-approval when he passed out and left us alone.

Monsieur Périgord attempted, with a trembling hand, to reach the decanter of stimulant, which I was compelled to pour out for him, and seemed to have recovered himself somewhat as he leaned back in his chair and looked at me.

"Well," he said, "we failed, and it was very thoughtless of me not to have told you before this that I commiserate with you on the loss of your ship. You did your best. I am informed that you made a gallant effort and that you crowned it with the kindness of having me notified at the

earliest possible moment of all that had happened. I have been childish and selfish, in brooding more over my own griefs than over your loss. For the sparing of your life I am most thankful. For my own failure, which is irrevocable and irredeemable, I am desolated. For you there is youth and hope, for me there is age, and —”

He threw up his hands with an eloquent gesture of despair, and threatened again to submerge himself in a sea of despondency. I took the papers from my inside pocket and held them toward him.

“You have, there,” I said, “a more complete report than has yet been given you.”

He took them and held them listlessly, while I, eager to have him open them, waited to see what he would do.

“They can wait,” he said, holding them in his hands.

“But it is important that you should read them,” I declared. “Important that you should read them before we proceed.”

He half opened them, and then, plainly disinclined for their perusal, refolded them with an excuse.

“The frailty of old age! I can’t read them without my glasses. To-morrow —”

“Where are they?” I demanded. “I will get them for you.”

Palpably annoyed, but willing to concede in the face of my obstinacy, he gestured toward the library table, from which I took the glasses and handed them to him. He fixed them on his high, fine nose, and with the attitude of one about to be hopelessly bored, but still yielding to my wish, unfolded and spread the French official documents upon his knees. I watched him expectantly. His eyes opened wide as they fell upon the heading of the first letter, his air of lassitude vanished, and with a nervous jerk he again drew himself from the depths of his chair and held the little file of papers higher. I felt it indelicate to witness his emotion, and so got to my feet, walked across the spacious library, took the liberty of opening the heavy shutter,

threw the window up, and stood looking out into the night.

Below me, here and there, could be seen the arc-lights of the city and faintly came the sounds of the band in the Plaza. It played a noble air, quite a fitting accompaniment to a climax of a noble effort. The stars appeared to shine more brightly, and a tiny, joyous breeze stirred the polished fronds of the palms beneath the window, and rustled as if whispering of great things through the waiting shrubbery. The faint perfume of flowers crept upward from the night, almost as illusive as a memory of flowers that had not survived, and seemed to invade the room. A paper rustled behind me as Monsieur Périgord turned a page. I turned my head and looked at him, and saw that he was bent very far over. His whole attitude suggested a prodigious eagerness to race through the written words. It was still premature and impertinent for me to violate the sanctity of his release by either word or scrutiny. I rested my elbows far out on the stone ledge, and tried to absorb myself in what might be seen and heard without. A bell bird off in the jungle of his private domain gave that weird, ringing call, that somehow this night had less of its overpowering melancholy and had taken on a tone of benison. Quite like the tender note of a vesper bell it sounded, bringing rest and peace after the struggles and turmoils of a long, long day.

Something like a prodigious sigh aroused me, and alarmed, I swung on my heels and looked at the old exile. He had collapsed like a shut clasp-knife, and fallen forward. The papers had fluttered from his hand to the floor by his side, and the hand itself hung listless and drooped over the arm of his chair. I was frightened. I ran to him, seized him beneath his arms, and rested him back in the seat, then, distracted, took the decanter, held it to his lips, and trickled some of its contents down his throat. I picked his glasses from the floor, where they had fallen, and, I believe, clumsily attempted to replace them on his nose,

when I saw that down his white cheeks were rivulets where tears had fallen. I could not bear that he should know how fully I had been aware of his emotion, and took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped them away even while he was recovering.

Still distracted, I returned to the window, closed it, and then the heavy shutters, as if to shut out into the darkness everything that might intrude upon this fine old man in his great hour. It was as if I were jealous of the night, or abhorred it as one who had crept stealthily up to stare curiously upon the secrets of Monsieur Périgord, who had so long and so bravely maintained them alone. I felt that to me solely, through straits of circumstance, had been given the privilege of sharing with him a portion of the heart that had never been worn upon his sleeve, and it was a very sacred trust. The windows closed, I returned to my seat and dropped into it, fixing my eyes on the tiny fire that, although slightly uncomfortable, was still companionable, like a living, leaping, exultant sharer of our little scene. Glancing furtively at Monsieur Périgord I saw that he was mentally alert again, but that he was making a desperate fight to recover from his emotion.

The silence that followed was prolonged and awkward. I could say nothing lest to him in his stress it seem banal, and he, I think, dared not speak lest he betray sentiment. And of sentiment betrayed, most men of worth stand in dread. Finally he reached the arm nearest me across the chair, found my hand and clutched it.

“Hale! Hale! —” he began, and then choked and stopped, and struggled to compose himself. But it seemed as if what he had tried to say had broken the ice of that uncomfortable, tense pause, and I found my tongue.

“It’s all right, Monsieur Périgord,” I declared, with a nervous jubilation. “Everything is all right now. I did n’t fail altogether. I did n’t do much, but I did the best I could. You owe it all to a man in Martinique, and a very good man he is. You will find his name on those

papers here and there. I did nothing. I lost your gold. It would have been indecent in me not to have tried to accomplish the rest; but it does n't matter now, any of it. You are no longer an exile. You are a citizen of France, and an honored citizen. They want you back there. Gold would have been something; but—don't you see? — the President himself thinks that the other part of it is the biggest of all; that you want to come back; that you were ready to give your gold to France in her hour of need, but that, biggest of all, you gave your heart! It is that that counts, Monsieur Périgord."

He could not respond, and I had to bridge the chasm of his speechlessness.

"They are very able calculators in France when it comes to balancing scales where one side is weighted with coin and the other with worth. The beam tipped your way. It was inevitable that it should be so. They will be glad to have you back in France, monsieur, where your estates will all be restored. You are going to pull through now. You have got to. You have got to begin over again. Why, good Lord, man! You will have twenty years there before you finish."

It seemed to arouse everything that had been pent within him for so long, and the gates of his restraint were thrown wide. I can't find the indelicacy to repeat what he said. There are speeches in this world that one must not repeat, and of these were the ones which Monsieur Périgord poured out to me that night. The extravagance of his declarations might seem absurd to one who felt less poignantly than I their meaning.

Promising to call upon him the next day I made my departure. Long before this the lights of the Plaza had been extinguished, and the streets were deserted; but the night itself was endowed and englamored with a mysterious sense of quietude and peace, quite like the feeling that a sailor has on reaching a perfect port after a violent storm.

CHAPTER XVI

IT is rather odd, but true, that a sailor in port without a ship invariably turns toward the water-front for a stroll. So it was that on the following morning Jimmy and I wandered toward the dock from which we had taken the last cargo that the *Esperanza* was ever to carry. The first man to greet us was the one who had been the night watchman when we were last there, and who had assisted us in a most friendly way.

"Got promoted to day work, have you?" I said, for want of better conversation.

"No, sir," he said. "There are two of us, and we take month in and month out. It was my turn to come on day work on the day after you sailed. Would you mind waiting until I go into the office? There is a letter there for you, sir."

Wondering who could have written me to such an address, I stood talking to Jimmy in the rather grateful shade of the overhanging eaves of the building, until the watchman returned and handed me a very grimy missive. It bore the appearance of having been carried in a not overly clean pocket for some time.

"That letter should have been given you before you left, sir," said the watchman. "It was the fault of that nigger who sweeps up the place at night. He is about a hundred and fifty years old, and has almost forgotten that he is alive. He found this letter two days before you sailed. Whoever delivered it shoved it under the door of the harbor-master's office. When the nigger came to sweep up, about four o'clock in the morning, he put it in his pocket and forgot it for two whole days. In the afternoon after the day you sailed he came to me, scratching his wooly head, and in trouble for fear it might be important and he would lose his job. Wanted to know if it was better for him to tear it up and throw it in the harbor,

or to go to the harbor-master and confess. I was afraid they would fire the old fellow, so I took it from him, and kept it in the hope of being able to send it to you if I could learn your address."

Thinking that it could be of no importance, I shoved it into my pocket, and after thanking the watchman and giving him a tip for his trouble, Jimmy and I continued our walk. I did n't think of it again until we were seated on a bench under the shade trees in the deserted Plaza, and then, idly, I tore it open. It is a foolish custom of mine to look at the signature of a letter first of all, and I was rather astonished to discover that my correspondent in this case had signed himself — for it was plainly in a man's handwriting — "A friend." The chirography was cramped and distorted, as if written by one who wished to conceal his identity, which is, of course, not unusual in anonymous letters. My carelessness disappeared before I had deciphered the first half-dozen lines; for it read:

DEAR SIR,

I accidentally stumbled on to something to-day that I think maybe you ought to know. You bought some stuff from the arsenal. The carter who hauled some ammunition for you in the last load was stopped just as he was coming into the town by a man with a clipped mustache, about five feet ten inches high, and with three scars on the side of his face. He told the carter that you had sent him to examine the stuff before it was hauled to the dock, but that he had lost his way and had not got to the arsenal in time. He told the carter you would not pay him for hauling it down there until it had been examined. The carter hated to pull it back up the hill, because it was heavy for his horse, and the man with the scars said maybe they could find some other place where he could look at it. The carter's stable was not far away, and he drove it there and unloaded it. The man told the carter that it would take him an hour or two, and that if he had anything else to haul he could go and do it and then come back. The man stopped in the stable and opened all the boxes, and there were shells in them. The carter's wife saw him at the job, and says he took nearly every one apart,

whatever that means. Then he packed them all up again, the way they had been, and after the carter came back told him they were all right, and that he could go ahead, and told him that he must n't say anything about him, the man with the scars, because you would be sore at him for not getting to the arsenal in time. Said he might lose his job, and gave the carter two dollars for himself, to keep his mouth shut. You are welcome to this information.

A FRIEND.

I had read the letter aloud, and the last words were not out of my mouth when Jimmy exploded: "Klein! That scoundrel deserved to lose his life!"

"Klein, of course," I asserted. "The description fits him perfectly. See: 'a man with a close-clipped mustache, and three scars on the side of his face.' That shows how he did the job."

"And if that fool nigger had n't forgotten the letter and shoved it into his pocket, we should have found out the shells were no good, and the chances are that the *Esperanza* would have reached the other side before this," growled Jimmy.

There was no disputing the truth of his statement, and I sat somewhat moodily trying not to cry over spilt milk. That blundering black had made the most expensive mistake of his life. We fell to discussing the author of the anonymous letter, but of course could arrive at no conclusion; for it was one of those indefinite things which nothing but time and patience could ever solve. And now it was too late. We were still conjecturing, and were convinced of but one feature, which was that our informant did not know Klein's name, or would have stated it, when we left the Plaza bench and went to our hotel for luncheon.

As we passed through the office the clerk called to Jimmy, and when the latter stopped he said, "There was a man here to see you this morning, sir — a man with his arm in a bandage."

"Must have been Cochrane," said Jimmy, looking at me.

"He left a card for you," added the hotel clerk, and took a scrap of paper from a pigeon-hole behind him and handed it to Jimmy.

The latter read it, and vented a low whistle of surprise. I had already started up the stairs to my room, and he followed after me.

"Well, Tom," he said, with a grin, "I was right, and you were wrong, about Cochrane. It was Cochrane who wrote that anonymous letter. You mistrusted him and thought he lied; but I did n't."

He held the card toward me. It was a mere scrawl, saying:

Called to see you this morning, but found you away. Will be here at eight o'clock to-night. M. COCHRANE.

I took the anonymous letter from my pocket, spread it out on the window ledge, and laid the latest missive beside it. A single glance afforded irrefutable proof that the handwriting was the same. The cramped and distorted letters were such as a man would write with his left hand by painful effort. In the face of such evidence, my suspicions of the oiler were perforce swept away; but I wondered, nevertheless, why he had been standing there on the dock that night when the gold was shipped. Twisted Jimmy was rather exultant over his judgment of character, and throughout the meal delivered me a lecture on "going slow before condemning a man unheard," as if he himself did n't have the reputation of suspecting everything and everybody in the world without either rhyme or reason. I was rather glad to get away from him and consideration of Cochrane when, obedient to my promise, I left him to visit Monsieur Périgord.

I found the house strangely rejuvenated, as if its owner had taken a new lease of life. The fine doors of the main entrance were flung wide, as were also all the front

windows, as if letting in light and air after a long period of gloom. The gnarled old footman was at the door to receive me before I rang the bell, and now came with a satisfied grin on his face, and bowed before me more deferentially than ever.

“Señor,” he said, “it is unbecoming in an old servant to thank you, but I trust you understand. My master, praise be to the Virgin! is a new man. He slept all this forenoon, had a hearty breakfast, and is now sitting out in the shade of the *patio*, waiting to receive you. You have the gratitude, sir, of my master’s household staff, for there is no other such man.”

He was actually voluble, and chattered perpetually while ushering me through the long hallway and out into the cool shade of the *patio*, where the first thing I observed was that the fountain had again been started, and played as if it, too, had been resurrected from the dead.

It was a very smiling Monsieur Périgord who received me, and I could scarcely credit the change in his face. It was not only more animated than I had ever seen it, but a strange, indefinable quality of peace had come over it, softening the rugged features and giving a new light to the eyes. I complimented him upon the change.

“Monsieur Périgord,” I said, “you have found the fountain of youth which the illustrious Ponce de Leon failed to discover. You are five years younger.”

He actually laughed, as he held up his hand and replied:

“You are mistaken, Captain Hale, in your reckoning. To be exact, I am forty-two years younger, inasmuch as forty-two years of my life have been canceled out; and I am starting again, and taking up the threads at just where I left them off. And I owe this to you, my friend.”

I was embarrassed by his gratitude, but felt a very great happiness for what I had accomplished. I could not divert him from the subject, try as I did, and finally had to let him exhaust himself of speech before I had the

opportunity of giving him the details of the sinking of the *Esperanza* with his gold aboard. He was intensely interested by my account of our efforts to give battle to the submarine that had destroyed us, and agreed with me that the traitor Klein had come to a merited end.

"But one must not forget," he said meditatively, "that, after all, the man is entitled to some forgiveness, and to some admiration for the courage with which he tried to serve his country. It must have required much bravery, Captain Hale, to fight such men as you and your crew, single-handed, and at the same time take a chance on his own life, all for — what did you say? Some plans? What plans? That is the part I don't understand. You have not made it clear."

I bit my lip, realizing that I must have said more than I intended.

"I thought," said I, "that I made it understood that it was probably the gold he was after."

But Monsieur Périgord shook his head, and declared: "No, for him to have any knowledge of that gold would have been utterly impossible. I saw to that. There was not a man connected with that enterprise who was not a confidential and trusted employee of mine. However, you evidently have some secret which you don't care to confide in me, and therefore we will let the matter drop, because I have other and more important things to discuss with you."

I saw that he took my silence as a just privilege of my own, and waited for him to proceed.

"I thought the entire matter over last night," he said, evenly, as if he had also measured the words he would use, "and came to the conclusion that you have earned as much, certainly, as was agreed upon by us, provided you delivered the gold and accomplished your mission. That portion of your enterprise which failed was not through your fault, and that part which you accomplished meant more to me than anything else possible

could have. I therefore intend to pay you the one hundred and fifty thousand dollars agreed upon."

It was a very big temptation, but I still flatter myself that I had the strength to resist it. It is not every man who has the opportunity in his life to turn down such a fortune solely on the grounds that he has not earned it. It may have been quixotic on my part to take this stand, and for a moment I was perplexed as to whether I was doing justice to the men of the crew, who would have shared with me, had we succeeded in delivering that gold in France; but a moment's reflection convinced me that they neither expected nor were entitled to it from the moment the *Esperanza* sank beneath the waves.

"That," I declared, "is impossible. I shall not accept it. I did not return to you as a beggar, nor did I come with the hope of reward. I came simply and solely as the bearer of news which I knew would bring you at least some recompense for your loss — a loss that had taken place under me, while I was, in a sense, your trustee. You had faith enough in my honesty to take a chance that not one man in ten million ever takes with another fellow being. Therefore, I should feel it a smirch in my memory if I accepted one penny of payment for something I did n't fully and unqualifiedly earn."

He started up in his chair, and for a long time looked at me. His remarkable sense of delicacy undoubtedly caused him to speak as he did, for he made no insistence, but bent toward me, and said, almost humbly:

"You are right; I was wrong. I beg your pardon, Captain Hale. The courtesies prevalent between gentlemen should have prevented my making such an offer, because obligations between gentlemen are not paid in coin. I must find some other way; but I honour you for your refusal."

I never warmed to this fine old gentleman more than I did in that moment. I was strangely tongue-tied. He spoke again, with his eyes fixed absently away from me,

as if further reviewing the case, and almost indeed as if I were not present, and he but soliloquizing audibly:

“Considered from a business point, you chartered your ship for a certain purpose, knowing that you could not get insurance upon her in such a dangerous mission. And again, from your viewpoint, you took all the risks of losing her. You stipulated to deliver a cargo of gold in France for payment. The cargo was not delivered.”

“That is quite right,” I asserted, “for although the mission was a double one, the commercial side of the transaction was entirely separate from the purely friendly and sympathetic issue. I took the latter on without hope of reward, and through friendliness for you. I failed in the commercial venture —”

“But very nobly won the other,” he interrupted softly. “Therefore, the commercial side of the transaction is finished. The other portion — that friendly mission, as you call it, a mere hope existing between two gentlemen friends — still stands. I can offer you nothing further, save the immense gratitude of one to whom you have done an absolutely inestimable service. You will at least accept my thanks.”

He put his hand over, caught mine, gripped it hard, and stared at me with very warm eyes, and then, with that remarkable shift of demeanor that characterized him, became suddenly again an executive and a man of affairs accustomed to big financial enterprises.

“As I understand it, Captain Hale, you are still at liberty?”

I nodded my head, wondering what was coming next.

“Good,” he said. “I now have another commission for you. The duration of this war is uncertain. It would be practically impossible for me to obtain a passage from Maracaibo direct to France. I have no inclination to wait for perhaps a year or two, until peace is declared. I am abundantly able to sail on my own ship. Ships can be had here by neither charter nor purchase. I trust you

and your judgment completely. I therefore propose to commission you to buy for me a ship suitable for my purpose, and such a ship as could be utilized during the progress of the war at a profit, and disposed of thereafter without too great a loss. What would you suggest should be her tonnage?"

Thus consulted as a seafaring man who had owned vessels, I could but come back to the purely business side of the question, and give him my judgment.

"I should say, monsieur, that it would depend entirely on what is available for purchase," I replied. "Personally, I should prefer a ship neither too large nor too small. The boats which are making most profit at present are those of between three and five thousand tonnage. It is preferable that they should have high engine power and be smart. If possible, they should be armed, for the time has now come when none but armed merchantmen are safe at sea. Yours should, if possible, be of neutral registration, although at present that seems to add but little to her chance for safety. That much for the business side of it. But here again enters the friendly advice in what you propose. And mine is that in times like these you take no risks whatever by trying to cross the Atlantic Ocean. It is dangerous."

"We are not discussing that side of the venture," he asserted, somewhat stubbornly. "That is for me to decide. And I may warn you also that I am dealing with you purely from the financial basis, for if you don't accept this commission I shall straightway go to your fellow countryman, Farnes, the broker here, and employ him as a purchasing agent, and with instructions to sign on a crew."

For a moment he looked his challenge at me, and I saw a surprising and defiant determination written large upon him. I knew that no words of mine could dissuade him from his purpose.

"As far as you are concerned," he said at last, "I

shall treat you merely as a confidential agent. You shall have the regular commission on the purchase of such ship as you deem suitable, and if you will become the master of her I shall pay you a very liberal salary and a bonus for yourself and crew, the same as I should pay any stranger were he to carry out my wishes. I am going to France on a ship of my own, and with the most trustworthy men that I can find. That part is positive. The sole difference that I shall make between you and any other broker is that I shall give you *carte blanche* to buy and outfit on your own judgment."

I realized at once that he was so resolute, and a blade of such fine steel, that he would have sailed for France on a raft if nothing else had been forthcoming. There was not the slightest use in combating such obstinacy. Entirely aside from reasons of friendship, there was no sense in my declining such a profitable offer. I was without a ship, and without a commission. He had put it upon a business basis, but so liberal that I could not afford to let such an opportunity pass by. And then, as if to offer me a further inducement, he advanced something more.

"I should not expect any man as competent as you to take charge of a ship I owned on any other than a profit-sharing basis. It would not be fair to ask a man to venture so much unless he were on a profit-sharing basis. I will give you one half of the profit you can make with any ship you buy."

"But that," I said, "would be too generous."

"That again is for me to decide," he retorted, with the same obstinacy. "And I tell you that if you do not accept this, it is the offer which I shall make to any other man who carries out my wishes."

I knew he meant it, and would fulfill his assertion. I left his house that afternoon, having agreed to become his confidential broker and also to become the master of his ship; but I carried with me a mental reservation, which

was that I should make but one trip across the Atlantic Ocean and that to humor this old man's desire. I could foresee in my commissions and one voyage a profit larger than could be made in any other way, for the time being, and it had the advantage of enabling me to hold together the crew of the old *Esperanza*, that I had so carefully selected. I had entered through sentiment in the first instance into an attempt to assist one for whom I had a very great pity, and saw no reason why I should not have the personal satisfaction of seeing it through to the end.

Although in an amicable mood, I was not at all eager to meet Cochrane that evening, and so made an excuse to leave Jimmy alone for his appointment; but I was not to escape meeting the oiler after all, for when I returned to the hotel after a long and lazy stroll which embraced not only the water-front but the Plaza, almost the first two men I saw were the engineer and Cochrane. They were seated at one of the little marble-topped tables on the pavement, and talking earnestly, when I started to pass them with the intention of going directly to my room; but Twisted Jimmy saw me. He called and asked me to come to the table and join them, with the remark that there were certain things I should know. Cochrane rose to his feet as I approached, and did not seat himself until I had found a chair and ordered a light refreshment, that being the custom of one occupying space in the busy hours of the evening. The oiler was painfully embarrassed, while Jimmy seemed secretly pleased over something. The latter broke the strain by turning to me, and saying:

"Captain, I thought perhaps you might have a question or two you would like to ask Mike?"

"I have," I asserted; and then, facing the oiler, asked, "I should like to know what you were doing on the dock at that hour of the morning when my boat pulled off? I saw you there."

Cochrane looked shame-facedly at the table for a moment before he answered. "For two reasons, sir. 'One that

I hoped that I could be of some use to you, and the other because I was homesick to see the old ship that had all my friends aboard, and was pulling out and leaving me alone."

"And you had no idea what we were loading, I suppose?" I interrogated dryly.

"Yes, sir, I knew it was the ammunition for the guns."

He had lifted his eyes to mine, and studying them, I was driven to the conclusion that he was telling what he believed to be the truth.

"Another thing I should like to know," I said. "When you learned we were being buncoed with the ammunition, why was it that you did not come to me and tell me of it, instead of doing such a fool thing as to write an anonymous letter?"

He flared up at this, with all the heat of the savage, fearless Irishman.

"You want to know the truth, sir, don't you? Well, then, I will give it you. You are a fine man, Captain Hale, to have for a friend, but you are a mighty unforgiving one when you become an enemy. After my one dirty trick aboard the *Esperanza*, I told you the truth of it all. You did n't believe me. I knew that if I went to you personally, you might not believe me again, and in addition to that might treat me like a dog, and tell me to get away and out of your sight. I liked you, sir, but you did n't like me. I admired you, but you thought I was a Judas. That's why I did n't come to you, since you have asked."

It was like a blow in the face to my self-esteem. It shocked me that any man should believe me vindictive and unforgiving, when I have prided myself throughout my life on trying to be fair, just, and decent. Somehow, the words of that fine old poet, Bobbie Burns, suddenly flashed through my mind, and I knew that the power had been given me through the lips of the oiler whom I had despised to see myself as not only he, but perhaps some others, had seen me. I felt that I had failed in more ways than one; that my aloofness had been mistaken for arrogance, and my

terseness of speech for mental ugliness. Well, it had cost me my ship; for had I been friendly, forgiving, or merely just, to this man whom I had crippled, his desire to make amends would have impelled him to come to me direct and give personal knowledge of the danger which threatened me. A strange and almost ridiculous impulse made me wish to square myself in his estimation.

"Cochrane," I said, "I am going to thank you for saying what you did. You've taught me a lesson. It does n't matter how, and I am not going to explain. You've proven to be a broader man than I, because you did your best, in spite of my treatment of you, to do me a service. There are two things I would like to have you do. The first is still to consider yourself my man; for I expect to have another ship, and the second is to take this!"

I stretched my hand across the table toward him, and his hand promptly came to mine, while we stared into each other's eyes with a very fine understanding, I hope. Indeed, it must be so, because we are still very good friends, Mike Cochrane and I. The Irish do have wit and diplomacy after all, for he relieved that very embarrassing situation with a droll grin and an apology, reverting, as he was apt to do in certain moments, to his native brogue: "It's sorry I am, sir, to have to give ye me left hand; but by a very unfortunate accident me right one has so gone out of business that I can't lift it as high as the breadth of the back of my finger-nail."

CHAPTER XVII

SO there were three of us, Twisted Jimmy Martin, Mike Cochrane, and I, who sailed away from Maracaibo one day to buy another ship with which to go adventuring. She landed us in Havana, Cuba, where, without any delay whatever, we got a Ward liner for New York, and had the pleasant and strange experience of being

seamen traveling as passengers, and free to criticize the handling of a ship by other men.

We landed without incident, and pursuant to the promise I had given Monsieur Périgord, I immediately wired him of our safe arrival. Knowing his eagerness for quick action I lost no time in beginning the round of ship-brokers' offices, and visiting the water-front. On the very first day I discovered that my task was going to be a slow one, and that the demand for ships was so great that they were commanding fabulous prices. It had got to a point where any old tub that could float, even if it was no bigger than a bathtub, was being put into service, and freight rates had risen to such a point that almost any ship was actually paying as much as she was worth on each successful voyage. What were they worth? The shipping market had gone insane, and any ship actually commanded ten times what it could have been purchased for in the year preceding the war. Before the week was out I began to be pestered with a daily cablegram from Monsieur Périgord, urging me to haste, and reiterating that I must not lose time by haggling over prices. Evidently he had no more idea of the market conditions than a child, and believed that all I had to do was to put money enough in my pocket, go out and buy a ship, in just about the same fashion as one would walk into a department store to buy a pair of socks.

Nor was I alone in my attempt to purchase, for we had not been in New York a week before Cochrane had got in touch with all the members of the old *Esperanza*'s crew, and the entire crowd waited upon me with the flat assertion that not only would they not sail on any other ship than one which I commanded, but that also they would assist me in my quest. Then began a period when, if all the rumors these men brought me could have been verified and realized, I should have been able to purchase more ships than had ever sailed the Atlantic Ocean. I chased down these rumors one by one, until I was led to take a

trip up to Fall River, Massachusetts, to learn that the "fine ship, sir," that was secretly for sale, was a mud-dredger, and then decided that while my men might be most excellent at sea, as shipping scouts they were about as useless as a dummy funnel aboard a sailing yacht.

Twisted Jimmy was the only one who made no effort to assist me; because no sooner had he reached New York than he fell into his old, mysterious ways, and frankly asserted that, inasmuch as he believed it would be a long time before we could buy a boat, he proposed to build another model of his invention, or at least gather together the material that would be necessary for him to take aboard our next ship when we sailed; for he seemed to take it for granted that another laboratory would be provided for him, and had hopes that it would be even more commodious than the one destroyed with the *Esperanza*.

I had about concluded that the Germans had indeed lost track of him, when the contrary was proven in a most disturbing manner. Jimmy had taken lodgings in Greenwich, quite close to the Italian section, as being the safest place for his researches, and after a day of disappointment, I went, one evening, to visit him. His house, one of the old and somewhat decrepit buildings that had originally been a private residence facing a triangular square, was situated where the trees in the little park screened the electric lights, and threw dark shadows over its front. It was not too well lighted at the best, and at any time after ten o'clock in the evening that neighborhood was practically deserted, save in the extreme heat of the summer time, when the park became the panting place for the poor. Jimmy's rooms were at the front of the third story. Adjoining his house was one which had been turned into a factory of some sort, probably for shirt-waists or incandescent burners, and always, after six o'clock in the evening, this was black and unoccupied. I had read a book one time on historic old Greenwich, and on this night, as I came into the little park, tired and depressed, I threw myself down on

a bench for a few minutes in which to contemplate the decay and metamorphosis into which this quaint place had fallen. Being in a dreamy mood, and in no hurry to disturb Jimmy, I probably stayed there longer than I had intended. I looked out from under the boughs of the trees at his rooms, where the curtains were drawn but exposed cracks of light on each side where the shades had been stretched, until here and there they gaped. It is said among oculists that there are two types of men whose eyes, through the training of their calling, become inordinately acute and far-sighted, and strange it is that these two types of men are so widely separate, being sailors inured to long night watches at sea, and men of the far Western desert whose eyes are attuned to enormous spaces. Perhaps being a member of one of these classes accounts for my surprised discernment of a mere shadow that was moving along the ledge adjoining Jimmy's house and the dark, deserted factory. Startled by my discovery, I dodged from bush to bush until I reached the park railings, where I stopped and stared. There was no doubt of it. An intrepid and skilled balancer was sliding along that narrow ledge high above the pavement, toward Jimmy's window. At first I was inclined to rush from the park, and shout, lest the intruder be intent upon doing Jimmy violence; but on consideration I determined to wait until the last moment before taking such a course. The shadow continued to advance until it actually reached the broad, deep ledge of Jimmy's window, on which it carefully seated itself, and then I discovered it had become motionless. I removed my shoes, climbed the park railings, and sought another point of vantage from which I could see that the man had gained a position from which he could stare through the opening at the side of the shade into the interior of Jimmy's room. He could not have been there more than five minutes at the utmost; yet to me it seemed at least ten times that long, and then, as if satisfied by his spying with what was going on in Jimmy's room, he moved back with the same caution

and skill, and I watched him reach the ledge, raise himself erect upon it, seemingly with his back to the wall, and then progress perilously back to the window of the factory. Coming still closer, I could discern that it was open, and when, noiseless as a ghost, the man reached it, he doubled up and disappeared inside. Immediately thereafter there was a cautious, sliding sound plainly audible in the stillness, after which all was black and lifeless. I stood for some time by the side of the door of the blackened buildings, waiting for the spy to emerge, until the futility of waiting dawned upon me; for it was quite certain that a man bent on such a mission would have other means of egress at the rear from which to make his regular escape. I therefore turned toward the door of Jimmy's hallway, found it unbolted, and boldly climbed the stairs, with which I was familiar.

In obedience to my tap Jimmy himself opened the door and invited me in. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and with a pair of ragged carpet slippers on his feet, slouched across the room to a little table on which rested a broad drawing-board, and an uncompleted plan, on which he had evidently been engaged.

"You are late, Tom," he said, with that familiarity which we adopted when alone together.

"So are you," I retorted; "I suppose you are working on plans for your invention, are n't you?"

"Yes," he said. "I am nearly halfway through. It is a great invention! Revolutionary, I tell you! You saw what it could do. Now, when I have got these working scales completed —"

"It will be time for them to steal them from you again," I asserted dryly.

"There is no danger of that," he declared. "Why, I am as safe now as if I were in Timbuctoo."

"You are, eh?" I said, somewhat sarcastically. "Nobody watching you at all, is there? Not a soul on earth has an idea you are here, or, if they know you are, who the

devil you may be. Oh, no, not at all! Suppose I were to tell you that for the last hour I have been out here watching a man who actually sat on your window ledge until he satisfied himself that the time was not yet ripe for him to burglarize your room and steal your precious plans."

He was so astonished and incredulous that for a moment his mouth hung down almost idiotically, and then he jumped to his feet, scowling savagely, and whispered hoarsely, as if fearing that the interloper were still on the window ledge: "Good Lord! You don't mean that, do you?"

"Of course I do," I replied. "I tell you I sat over in the park and saw a man come from the adjoining building, plant himself on your window ledge, and sit there for quite a while, watching you at work. After that he turned and went back the same way as he came, and I saw him shut the window behind him. I watched in the hope of getting him, until it struck me I was a blithering ass for not finding out where the back door of that mansion is, and catching him as he came out through it. They are waiting for you to finish those plans, and, believe me! the job will be pulled off this time if they have to murder you to do it."

Twisted Jimmy ran with absurd haste to the window, threw the blind and sash up, and poked his head out into the night air, while I sat watching him with much intolerance. After he had again closed the window he came back, pulled out the drawing-pins, rolled his half-finished plans into a wad, and locked them in a battered old trunk that would have been as useful a protection as a tin biscuit box in the hands of a burglar with a can-opener.

"If you will take my advice," I suggested, "you will give me every one of those plans, and all the memorandas you have, when I leave here to-night, and you will do no more work of this kind until you are in some safe place. I tell you, Jimmy, they will get you yet if you don't look out. What you need is a guardian."

"I believe I do, and I'll get out of here to-morrow," he declared wrathfully.

"You will do nothing of the kind," I said. "You can beat that to death by simply staying here and pretending to draw—useless things, of course, to throw them off the track, in case they get in."

About an hour later when I left I took the plans with me, and on the following day made it my business to rent a safety deposit box wherein I locked them.

Troubles never come singly, for at dinner I discovered in the evening's paper, in big head-lines, a flash story, embroidered to the limit, asserting that the ship *Esperanza*, when she was sunk in the Caribbean Sea, had six million dollars' worth of gold on board. The news had leaked, after all, from Monsieur Périgord's private bankers, and was now being flung broadcast as a story of romance. I sent out and bought other papers. Being a dull news day each one had worked remarkable talent for reading matter.

One journal drew comparisons between this and other losses, and another gave a list of gold ships resting on the bottom of the Caribbean Sea that dated back to the time of Pizarro and the Spanish conquest. Then I blundered upon a short article on salvage, in which the statement was made, "on good authority," that a certain person — name unmentioned — was even then building a new appliance for recovering wrecks and treasure from deep-sea depths, and that doubtless the gold of the *Esperanza* would be circulating again within a short time.

I was interrupted by Jimmy, who had come to pass the evening with me, and handed him the newspaper. He read it, and suddenly began to mumble to himself as if vastly disappointed at such news. He leaned across the table toward me, made sure no one was within hearing, and then declared in an undertone: "You thought I was working on the drawing for that new light, did n't you? Well, I was n't! Those plans you carried away were not only for the light, but were rough drawings for a com-

plementary invention as well, which is to accompany the light you saw. I was going to surprise you by telling you that you and I together could salvage ships at depths which have never before been attempted in all the history of wrecks in this world."

It took me a full minute to realize that he was thoroughly in earnest, and had I not been so confident of his genius as an inventor, I should have laughed at him; yet knowing what I did of his accomplishments I began to think of the possibilities involved. Could he prove his belief and put his invention into actual practice there was wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. I blurted out something stupid, like, "You don't mean it, do you?"

"Of course I do," he asserted, in that same mumbling undertone, and then, as if exasperated by what he had read, added: "Just my luck! Somebody beats me to it, every time. We have got to have time and money to put my scheme into operation, and here, according to this paper, somebody else is already preparing, and will be there before we get a chance."

He had laid before me a rich and tempting avenue of thought, and I could but slowly work out the different branches thereof and what it might lead to as my quickened imagination thought of such possibilities. And yet there was the war still being fought with frightful earnestness and daring over every navigable ocean on earth. Ships torpedoed without warning, though they might be nothing more than tramp freighters; ships whose values did not warrant the discharge of an expensive projectile, being overhauled and sunk by shell-fire; mere trawlers, dredgers, and rafts being sent to the bottom with carefully placed bombs.

"That's all right," I assented stoutly, "but just the same the war works for us. You and I both know that there are submarines in the Caribbean Sea. If these unknown inventors had their apparatus completed at this moment, they would not be immune from attack

down there while doing that bit of salvage. They would be fools to attempt it. As long as this war lasts, there will be no security for anything that floats anywhere on the seas. We shall have ample time to try out our own schemes before anybody dares go down there and try to pick up what we have lost. We have the advantage of knowing where it is. No one else, save those aboard the submarine that sunk us, can have such definite knowledge. The thing for us to do is to begin to lay plans for operations after the war; certainly not while it is in progress. If you can do what you think you can — ”

“I can do it!” he shouted, banging his fist on the table until the dishes rattled. “I tell you I’m too wise in experience not to know when I am able to accomplish certain things.”

He got no further. We were interrupted by a prodigious noise in the streets. The sounds floated up to our windows. It was the shouting of newsboys and the murmuring roar of a multitude. The United States was threatening war over another piece of German insolence, this time unbearable.

CHAPTER XVIII

THREE followed days of anxiety and suspense, as the Nation gathered itself solidly for the acceptance of a challenge to its honor; days in which neither Jimmy nor I could devote ourselves to our separate tasks. And then the Nation suddenly declared itself through its President, and all private pursuits were at an end, thrown into the universal and prodigious effort of preparation. The United States went to war in earnest.

I cabled Monsieur Périgord asking him to release me from my contract, telling him that in the hour of my country’s need all that I had to give, myself included, must be given, and by return received his reply:

I do not release you for longer than the duration of the war. I urgently request you to keep in communication with me as opportunity offers at regular intervals. I shall postpone my return to France until the war is finished, which, please God, may be soon now that your nation has also entered the conflict on the side of justice.

Jimmy was with me when it was received.

"Well," he said, "the old chap means well, and maybe we shall want a friend or two after it's all over. Now, of course, we must go to Washington with the plan for the light. It will be invaluable to our country. We must make it a gift; our contribution. Everything else is off."

I was glad to hear him express himself thus. I had wondered what his attitude would be regarding his invention.

"Our Government accepts no gift of that character," I said, quietly, "without recompense. Jimmy, you will be a wealthy man."

"You mean *we* shall," he insisted. "But the recompense is secondary now. I suppose you will get the plans from the safety deposit box to-morrow, and we will start at once?"

"Assuredly," I replied, as we walked toward his rooms.

Still talking and planning, we climbed the stairs and he turned the key and switched on the light. His exclamation reached me as he did so. The room was in complete disorder. Not an article of its contents had escaped. The upholstering of chairs had been ripped off and thrown on the floor. His garments had been ripped. The wallpaper had even been torn off in one corner where it was loose. Not a scrap of paper was visible, as if everything, even to spare memoranda, had been taken. His wastebasket had not been spared. The carpet had been torn up and thrown in a heap in the corner. The German agents had dared wait no longer and had made their final search.

"Could they have secured anything important?" I asked, in perturbation.

"No. I have carried the rough drawings of the secondary invention in my pocket," he said. "And the plans for the light are in your possession, you know. Fortunate, was n't it? All they got would be of no use to them, and not vital to me."

He chuckled as if at a good joke, and we rearranged his apartment as best we could, but, deciding that it was no longer tenable, packed a suit-case for traveling, and returned to my hotel, where he passed the night.

We were at the safety deposit vaults when they opened, and took therefrom the precious plans. We guarded them as if our lives depended upon their security all the way to Washington, and up to the Naval Building, where I was confident I could gain a hearing. Nor was I mistaken in that, for we did, and gained the ear of one who had been my superior and friend in the old days. And it was to his astonished hearing that I told the story of the light, and its possibilities; of how the plans had once been stolen; of the attempt to steal them in New York, and that we had now brought them to be used by our country.

"If it were other than you telling me this, Mr. Hale," he said gravely, "I should declare it incredible. Now I will give orders that I am not to be disturbed, and with your consent have a look at them."

He did so, and we spread out on his table drawing after drawing, which Jimmy explained in his slow, methodical way.

"We have also the formulæ and close calculations on a separate sheet which no one but I could understand," he said in conclusion. "They, of course, are the key to the entire set of plans. One without the other would be so incomplete as to be almost useless. They were purposely compiled in that manner. Let me see. Those sheets are —"

'He began to move the plans about, sheet by sheet. The admiral and I attempted to assist him.

"My God!" Jimmy exclaimed, sinking into a chair. "They are n't here! I must have left them in that old trunk of mine when I gave you the others, Tom, and now — now they 're gone! Stolen! Lost! They've all got to be done over again!"

The German Government had gained something that was useless to its purpose, but had won an incalculable victory in that it had prevented our Government from using one of the most effectual devices for waging war until, by laborious research and experiment, it could again be brought to perfection.

And it was on this work that Jimmy engaged, with all means and protection afforded him by the Navy Department, while I returned to the service and the sea. I think that but for anger and hatred of Germany, he might have despaired of his task; but these incentives and the admiral's encouragement started him doggedly on his quest. As for me, with all my hopes of bringing to our country's arms a most formidable weapon crushed, I threw myself into my work, and was grimly pleased when ordered to join a battle cruiser in the North Sea where, until the war was over, I waited in feverish hope that Jimmy might be inspired to complete his work speedily — more speedily than was human.

PART II

CHAPTER XIX

THE end of the war came so suddenly and unexpectedly that men were taken unawares and readjustments were made with extreme difficulty. The unconditional surrender of the Central Powers was so complete, its enforced disarmament so quickly executed, that the Peace Council had barely signed the covenants before we men of the Naval Reserve were out of service, leaving the regular navies of the Allies to complete the work. The specialists and the inventors had been released weeks before, and hence it was that, landed in New York, I hastened to meet Jimmy, intent upon taking up the broken threads of our lives and fortunes. His appearance was unchanged. His first words betokened the old gruff Jimmy.

"If the cursed war had n't ended when it did, if it had been prolonged for even a month, I should have been able to do my share, and to have helped drown some of the cursed Huns!" he declared savagely. "Just my luck! I was actually assembling a model when the news came. It worked more flawlessly than the old one. It's over there in that steel vault. I threw that cursed tin trunk away. But now we are just where we were, except that we're busted."

"How about the salvage mechanism," I asked.

"That's big. And it's our great hope." He brightened up, and before I could check him had launched volubly into a mass of enthusiastic descriptions that would have baffled a greater technician than I to follow.

"We must try to get some one to finance us," I said at last. "And the unfortunate part of it is that we have no friends with money."

"By the way," he said, "I forgot to tell you. Old

Périgord is here in town. Came up from Maracaibo and is waiting to see you before he goes to France. Funny old cuss. I've got so I rather like him — all but his clothes. He's — he's a little too silk-hatty and patent-leathery for me. But he's mighty fond of you, Tom. Let's walk over to his hotel; because he'd never forgive you if you were in town an hour before looking him up."

Remembering how I had been one of the instruments in his financial undoing, but recalling his great trust and kindness in detail, I was eager to see him again.

We found him in his apartments, and there I was again made aware of his greatness. We had talked nearly an hour before he somewhat delicately questioned me as to my intentions for starting life over again from the bottom rungs of the ladder. I had no hesitancy in telling him of my situation, and finally, almost in desperation because of Jimmy's and my own lack of financial resources, asked him if he knew of any financiers who might modestly back us in our enterprise. His reply came like a welcome thunderbolt from the skies of hope:

"Why, I thought that was understood," he said, as if hurt. "Of course I shall furnish the funds if they are not excessive."

"But — but," I protested, "I thought you were practically ruined through the *Esperanza*'s loss!"

"For ready cash, yes," he said, with a faint smile. "But I have lands which we can mortgage. How much is required?"

"An enormous sum. Between two and three hundred thousand dollars," I said, feeling again hopeless.

"And with that you would — Explain how the inventions of which you spoke could be applied in order to profit from them?"

"With that amount of money we would buy a submarine and have it altered to suit our needs. We'd put in a submarine searchlight and a salvage mechanism I have invented, and could salvage ships if they were full

fifty fathoms deep; something that never has been done by any man before. We could recover the *Esperanza* herself and get back your gold; for Tom here says she lays but twenty fathoms down!" roared Jimmy.

The count looked incredulous, almost amused, and shifted his eyes to me interrogatively for confirmation.

"I believe it true, sir," I said without hesitation. "I have been given little information concerning the mechanism my friend refers to, but know of the light, for I have seen it work."

And there I was compelled to stop, because I could give no details, these having never been confided to me by the inventor.

"We'd have to have a submarine specially fortified to withstand enormous pressures," said Jimmy eagerly. "With that I can do the rest. I know I can! Why, sir, there's not a salvage company in existence that could even compete with us. Your share in it would make you rich, sir."

"My share? My share?" said the count, lifting his hands deprecatingly, and then turning to address me. For a moment he paused as if reflecting over something, and then said: "The time has come for the utmost free speech between friends. Being a very lonely and disappointed old man, Captain Hale, I intrusted you with what to me was a great enterprise, which I affirm you carried to success. You understand what I mean. It is true that you lost my gold and your ship. The loss of the gold was, after all, but little to me. The loss of your ship was much to you. I conceived a plan of compensating you, because there in Maracaibo you refused direct reward. Did you think I was so foolishly impatient to return to France that I actually wished a ship for that purpose? Poof! That was all assumed. What I really desired was to purchase a better ship than the *Esperanza* with the full intention of eventually giving her to you, because you had laid me under a bond of gratitude that, being

a question of honor between gentlemen, could not be paid by a direct passing of money. I proposed at least to see that you, as a young man who had endeared himself to me, should not suffer financially. It was the least I could do."

I felt embarrassed by his generosity. Jimmy Martin was actually clutching the arms of his chair in suspense and surprise.

"I will furnish the funds you and Monsieur Martin require, not only to purchase the vessel for your proposed attempt, but also to equip it as you wish. You two men will then salvage the gold that was lost in the *Esperanza*. If you succeed you shall have one half. This is about what any ordinary salvage company would demand for such a task, provided she lay in deep water. How is that for a business proposition?"

"But," I objected, "suppose we don't succeed? Then you would lose somewhere between two and three hundred thousand dollars at the least. Submarines have been worth more than double that sum up to now."

"That's my lookout," he declared. "I have gambled bigger sums before. I shall put more than three hundred thousand at your disposal in the hope of being able to regain my share of the gold that was lost, and if you succeed I make a million dollars profit, and at the same time give you two an opportunity, not only of testing the merits of Mr. Martin's invention, but also for a profit that should enable both of you to step confidently into future operations."

"And you are not asking me any share in my invention?" inquired Jimmy, with bulging eyes. He leaned forward and stared at Monsieur Périgord as if the latter were some new type of fairy godmother.

"No, certainly not. I have other things to think of. I don't wish to be bothered by additional burdens of mind. I make what I consider a liberal business proposition, nothing more. You are not to be bound, either of you,

by anything further than your attempt to recover a portion of what I have lost. Is that fair enough?"

Jimmy dug his knuckles into his eyes, and I am not sure that he did not pinch himself lest he be dreaming at such unexpected and unsolicited generosity. Of course we accepted it! There was nothing else to do as far as I was concerned, and Jimmy was so elated that I feared he might attempt to sing as we passed down the corridor after leaving Monsieur Périgord's apartments that afternoon.

Our chief fear now lay in the danger that some other salvage company might beat us to the *Esperanza* before we could prepare ourselves; but, as if Fate had at last turned a smiling face upon us, that very night a newspaper contained in its marine review the following:

Some of the manufacturers of submarine craft and appliances are now in a most awkward predicament, unless working under contracts which guarantee acceptance. The latter firms are, of course, secure against loss; but there are two or three firms that have been privately experimenting on new craft that have unfinished work on hand. In engineering circles there is a rumor that one of these independent firms has been working secretly on a submarine which, it was hoped, would prove a vast advance over anything hitherto created, in one particular at least. It embodies fundamental changes in structure permitting it, if successful, to attain lower depths of submergence than hitherto attained by any submersible craft. The enormous slump in war vessels, now that international conventions for disarmaments and restrictions of armaments have been signed, leaves this interesting and ambitious project anything but an asset in its builders' hands.

My inquiries on the following day, discreetly made through a marine reporter I had known in former years, evinced the fact that the firm referred to was the Bellairs Submarine Company, an offshoot corporation of the Merrimac Steel Shipbuilding Company, up on the Connecticut coast, and also that I might find it difficult to

induce the management to display their secretly built marvel-boat.

"They will not talk to any one unless he can prove that he has ready hard cash," cynically remarked the marine reporter. "Besides, what on earth do you want a submarine for? Going to try to dredge oysters with one, or going pearl-fishing? Chuck it! You'll get nowhere and wish you were back aboard one of the old sail packets you people used to own."

But he had given me a caution that I lost no time in profiting by, and that was regarding my financial backing. And this, Monsieur Périgord smilingly assured me, should be made satisfactory immediately. Hence, it was but a few days later, in a bright forenoon, that I arrived at the Bellairs Works and sought their offices. I had some trouble in gaining audience with the general manager in person, who seemed to begrudge me a few minutes' conversation. I put my case to him very bluntly.

"Mr. Seymour," I said, "I came to see you concerning a paragraph I read in a newspaper yesterday."

I took the cutting from my pocket, handed it to him, and he read it with a frown, and then handed it back.

"Well?" he asked brusquely.

"If the statement made in that is correct, you doubtless have a submarine boat nearing completion which you wish to dispose of. Your market is now extremely limited, no doubt, with even a possibility of having the boat left on your hands. If this boat will do what is indicated in this cutting, and can be completed within a reasonable length of time, and is within my means to purchase, I am in the market for her."

Instantly I knew that I had him, for he could not conceal the look of relief and interest that came into his eyes. Also there was an instant change in his manner, for he became as courteous and hospitable as any salesman could be to a prospective customer.

"May I ask if you represent any Government?"

"Assuredly not," I replied, "but I am an ex-naval man of the United States Navy, who has had much experience with submarines, and who is now in a position to gratify what may be a whim. I am thinking of buying a submarine for my own use."

"Oh, I see," he said; "I suppose that possibly you are a scientist interested in sub-ocean studies?"

It was my cue, and I think I may be forgiven under the circumstances for misleading him. Yet he was extremely cautious, and said that he felt entitled to be assured not only of my responsibility, but also of the value of my word as to the maintenance of silence concerning his craft before its secrets were intrusted to me.

It was a very easy matter for me to give him the required references, which had already been established not only through my own bank, but also through the bankers with whom Monsieur Périgord did business; hence it was my own suggestion that he use the telephone to New York while I strolled around and amused myself as best I could for an hour or two. The fact that he jumped at this offer was further proof to my mind that he was extremely anxious to find a purchaser, and when I left him I was surprised at the ease with which I had accomplished the first steps of my mission.

Shipyards have always interested me, so I had no tedium in the wait, but wandered through the great works where ships in all stages of construction were on the ways, enjoying the staccato clang of the steel riveters, and watching the huge traveling cranes that moved steadily backward and forward in their massive tasks. My references must have been very satisfactory, for when I returned at the appointed hour I found Mr. Seymour not only ready but eager to talk, as well as to conduct me to the boat which I wished to purchase.

On the way to her berth, and while inspecting her, he gave me a vast amount of technical information, which, even though I discounted it somewhat, convinced me that

if his expectations were fulfilled the new boat would prove to be a most decided improvement over anything hitherto constructed. The one distressing feature to me was that she could not be completed for nearly a month. Otherwise, as far as I could judge, she should prove eminently satisfactory for my purpose. We returned to the office, and for the first time I broached the subject of terms. His initial price I considered exorbitant, and it took much argument and persuasion to induce him to come to figures that I thought reasonable, but which he declared would result in a considerable lose to his company. Yet, finding me obdurate, he came to these terms with the frank admission that in any event his company was threatened with a much greater loss, and he laid upon me but one imposition, that I report to him any difficulties I thought might be overcome and give him suggestions as to improvements, while at the same time maintaining secrecy concerning her mechanism until patents could be obtained. To all of this I acceded, and we drew up a memorandum of agreement, by which in case her tests proved up to a certain stipulation, she was to become mine upon payment of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in cash. As her prospective owner I was given a pass to the shipyards, with the privilege of bringing with me, at any time, two men for whom I personally vouched, and that night I returned to New York considerably elated over my success.

On the following day I took Monsieur Périgord and Jimmy for an inspection, and their attitudes were very different. Monsieur Périgord seemed abstracted and bored but Jimmy was vastly interested in even the most intricate and minute details. Strangely interested, I thought at the time, but justly so I discovered that night when he gave me his reasons. It was after Monsieur Périgord, tired by his day's outing, had retired to his own apartments that Jimmy came to my room with some crude drawings.

“These,” he said, “are the alterations which will be

necessary for our work. Do you think you can trust that general manager up there to keep our secret as well as he can trust you to keep his?"

I had made inquiries on this very subject, and was convinced I was dealing with an honest man, so had no hesitancy in assuring Jimmy that I believed we should be safe in at least getting him to give us an estimate on what the charges would cost and making the alterations in accordance therewith.

Another week went by, in which time I saw but little of Jimmy, who was absorbed in perfecting his drawings to working scales, and I had nothing to do beyond companioning Monsieur Périgord on his various expeditions. In a measure he seemed slightly bored whenever I began to dwell upon our project; but his confidence in me was assured by his announcement that he had arranged a credit for me to the extent of five hundred thousand dollars, and did not wish in the future to be bothered with any of the details of our enterprise. Finally convinced that he could do no more, he succeeded in booking a passage on one of the first regular liners to sail for Cherbourg. Both Jimmy and I went to see him sail, and his joy was such that he almost upset my self-poise by kissing me on both cheeks at the head of the gangplank when we were going ashore. Strange it is how different are the customs of different people! Well, after all, he was French, and did what would have been natural to a Frenchman had he been parting with an only son. I did not even then realize how great a hold I had gained in my benefactor's affections, for I cannot speak of him otherwise than as a benefactor, unsought, unexpected, and gained by accident.

Jimmy and I moved from New York to the city on the shores of the Sound, where we could be in constant touch with the progress of our purchase. When the proposed alterations were submitted, we were confronted with another annoying delay, for it required more than a month to construct the new mechanisms and to finish the sub-

marine. In the meantime Jimmy had, by various subterfuges, such as having one part made in Chicago, another in Boston, another in New York, and another in Philadelphia, reconstructed his searchlight, which we could ourselves install if our new boat satisfied the demands made upon it. And then, at last, we came to the day when the first test of our submarine was made.

The Bellairs Works had a modern Laurenti testing dock, the invention of that great Italian, by which a submarine is thrust into an enormous tube capable of withstanding terrific pressure, is surrounded by water, and then compelled to undergo the severest tests of all. I think that the general manager, Seymour, must have been somewhat doubtful and felt a wavering confidence in his craft, from the fact that it is customary in the Laurenti tests to put two technical experts into the submarine which is to undergo this enormous pressure, they being connected by telephone with those outside the cylindrical steel shell, and to report at frequent intervals their observations as to what is taking place; for on the first test of our new boat there were no men inside. We stood there by this ungainly structure, hearing the throb of enormous pumps behind us and watching the gauges until, in a state bordering on almost feverish suspense, we saw the indicators crawl to a strain — and for the benefit of the sceptical I assert that this is true — of 148.77 pounds per square inch, which, by engineering standards of .435 pounds pressure per square inch for each vertical foot of submergence, would show that the hull of our craft was enduring as much as if she had been sunk in fifty-seven fathoms of ocean water, or three hundred and forty-two feet depth!

There is scarcely a layman who does not know that the human body undergoes a normal atmospheric pressure of fifteen pounds per square inch upon its surface, or about thirteen tons for the average man. Think, then, of what nearly one hundred and fifty pounds, more than nine times that pressure, means. The record submergence test

ever made before that was presumably undergone by a United States submarine, F-1, in San Francisco Bay, when she attained the remarkable depth of two hundred and eighty-three feet, where for ten minutes she traveled at a rate of six knots per hour. The normal depth to which a submarine goes is one hundred feet, although the United States Navy, which has been the most exorbitant in its demands, required that a submarine, before being accepted by the Government, should undergo a submergence test of two hundred feet. It is said that the German Government in its later submarine tests demanded hulls that could endure a strain equivalent to two hundred and fifty feet in depth; but it is a matter of extreme doubt whether they ever succeeded in building a boat that would stand this submergence without a buckling of its plates, disruption of its valves, or permanent injury to the boat.

It may therefore be conjectured with what interest we heard the valves of the Laurenti dock drawn up, and waited for the discharge of the water surrounding the submarine inside this hollow cylinder, to see whether we were to look upon a crushed, useless object, or to learn that all submarines constructed theretofore had been completely outdone. Very eagerly we opened the end of the cylinder, and men made a cursory outward inspection. So far as we could observe, nothing had given. The conning-tower was opened, and we descended inside the submarine. Not a sign was there to betray the severity of the test. The valves had proven perfect also, and we knew, as we stood there, that as far as structure was concerned, we stood in the most perfect boat ever built.

“So far, so good,” declared Seymour, suppressing as best he might his enthusiasm. “I propose that now we put her to another test while we remain inside.”

We did so, and this time the pressure was slightly increased, and not a sign of weakness appeared. Again we stood in open air, after which, owing to the lateness of the hour, we departed.

When we came to the yards on the following morning, the boat was already afloat in the Sound, and we boarded her with a picked crew, to cruise to where we could gain depth for the final test. It was a disappointment to Seymour; for she did not register the speed, either awash or light, that he had expected. She could do but little better than twenty knots running light, whereas he had hoped for much more.

"It must be due," he insisted, "to the altered shape forward, made necessary by your changes."

"She has speed enough to suit us," I replied, much to his relief; "and it is now but a question of her being able to free herself from depths, and force the water from her balance tanks."

It was an anxious time when, after taking all precautions possible, we closed the ventilators and conning-tower, and let the water into her larger ballast tanks, then into her fore and aft tanks, and waited to learn whether the latest improvements embodied in her would permit her to submerge on an even keel to a great depth; for it is customary for a submarine to submerge by starting her electric motors, and, by the aid of hydroplanes outside the hull, to drive herself under on long descending planes, until she reaches the desired depth, after which, on the horizontal plane she proceeds evenly, steering by ordinary rudders to alter her lateral courses.

I stood behind the company's expert and watched the indicators of the gauges, as they told, with marvelous precision, that we were steadily descending without the use of power. The bead of the spirit level stood as if frozen to the zero mark, showing that her keel was resting as true as if she were poised on some stationary table. Down, down we slipped until we gained the almost unprecedented depth of fifty fathoms, when I myself called a halt. I could see no sense in further risking our lives. We rested there for fully an hour, and inspected every portion of her. She was standing the strain like a

thoroughbred, and now came the moment when power was turned on from the electric accumulators, and we traveled for a full half-hour at a speed of seven knots.

"Are you satisfied?" Seymour asked me; and I said, "Yes."

"Then shall we emerge?"

"Yes, if we can," I said.

There was an order given, a sudden change in the quality of the boat's vibration, and she quivered as the big centrifugals drove the air from the reserve into the tanks, and began forcing the water ballast outward into the green depths surrounding us. Our eyes were fascinated now by the guage, and I am positive that all of us were vastly relieved when we saw the indicators begin slipping backward, from fifty to forty-five, from forty-five to thirty-five fathoms, and then, ever more rapidly, begin to slide upward. The men in front of the gauge gave a great sigh of satisfaction, and pointed upward. Light was shining through the periscope. We were on the surface again. The conning-tower hatch was thrown open, and we climbed to the deck of the boat, that, inasmuch as she was nearly three hundred feet in length, was commodious. We shook hands all round, so elated were we by the knowledge that we were really on the most advanced under-water boat ever built, while some of her crew phlegmatically began rigging the steering-gear of the bridge from which she was commanded when cruising "light." She had proven her resources. She was our boat. In the afternoon of that day I drew the largest check I had ever drawn. It was for two hundred and sixty thousand dollars, and I knew that, thanks to the beneficence and trust of Monsieur Hector de la Périgord, it would be paid as promptly as if it had been for one of the little checks of ten or twenty dollars that I had been in the habit of writing. To me it was a very important occasion. I still remember the thrills that passed through me, and still wonder if my hand trembled as I signed my name!

CHAPTER XX

DESPITE our best efforts, it was impossible to avoid the thousand and one annoying little delays in connection with Jimmy's apparatus, the final fitting of the submarine, and the purchase of other accessories. We were fortunate in being able to buy at very reasonable figures pontoons and a heavy barge built for wrecking, and provided with powerful cranes.

The delay gave me time to drill and train in their new duties such members of the old Esperanza's crew as we had been able to find, and with whom Jimmy, throughout the war, had tried to keep in touch. There were but two or three of the men who had ever worked aboard a submarine, and of these, oddly enough, the most competent proved to be none other than Mike Cochrane, the oiler who had been our enemy, but had now become one of our most loyal men. We were also fortunate in being able to secure an expert mechanician from the Bellairs Company, a man who proved invaluable in a sort of non-descript capacity, combining the duties of engineer and consulting expert. He was a lean, lank, tow-haired Yankee of the inventive type, who drawled and slouched in a most unseamanlike manner, seemed incapable of ever displaying any emotion whatever, fear least of all, and whose sole ambition was to obtain money enough to buy himself a farm somewhere up in Vermont. "So," as he said, "that he could be far enough away from the sea not to hear the doggone thing rattling about." His name in itself was a poem, being Obadiah Salvation Binks, which was immediately shortened by the men of the crew to "Sal."

There were other conditions extraneous to the equipment of our enterprise that keyed up our impatience. For instance, an enterprising special writer in one of the Sunday newspapers discussed the enormous push given

to salvage operations now that the bottom of the sea was literally covered with victims of the war, and compiled a most ingenious list of treasure boats that had been wrecked, and the supposed depths in which they had been sunk. Among these was the *Esperanza*, which was presumably resting on a thirteen-fathom shoal. The writer took for granted the exaggerated statement, magnified from the Maracaibo source, that she carried in her strong room six million dollars' worth of gold. It seemed to me as if that vast fortune and its comparative accessibility was one of the choice plums for gossip, and several other papers afterwards referred to it. My friend, the marine editor, came to me for an interview, and while I told him as little as possible, that which I did n't tell him his quick imagination furnished, and I was given more fame than I desired. Discreet though the men of my crew all were, one of them must have been taken unawares and talked too much, because another Sunday newspaper published an account of the sinking of the *Esperanza*, padded and embroidered until it assumed the proportions of a terrific naval battle, endowed with most heroic exploits. I wrote a letter to this publication, denying the story, and requesting them to print it, but if they did I never saw it.

One condition was very evident, that we had no time to lose if we desired to be first on the scene to salvage the *Esperanza*, which lay far beyond tide waters, and was therefore in the open seas. Time had passed so rapidly that under any other circumstances no one would have attempted to salvage the *Esperanza* at that season of the year; for no one but an experienced wrecker fully realizes the difficulties and dangers attending such operations in any other than calm seas, and now the time was approaching when the fierce tropical hurricanes might swoop down across the Caribbean with terrible effect. Yet, it was certain that, notwithstanding those dangers, there would be found adventuresome spirits to take the risks; six

million dollars being a prodigious prize. It is a fact that of all the men who live by the sea, the most reckless and daring are wreckers and divers. The annals of the heroic rescues which these men have performed voluntarily along our stormy North Atlantic coast alone would fill volumes.

Everything was in readiness, and with the utmost secrecy possible the lumbering but stanch old sea tug, the Sea-Gull, with my chief mate, Rogers, as captain, and the second engineer of the old Esperanza as chief engineer, and a crew made up from men of the Esperanza, augmented by a few others whom I could trust, sailed away from the Atlantic Basin in New York, and started on the long and laborious trip southward. Knowing that we should reach our hunting grounds much more quickly in the submarine, which Jimmy and I had christened the Hector, we did not put out from our berth in Long Island Sound until two or three days later, which gave us opportunity for testing Jimmy's submarine searchlights to the utmost. The beginning of our enterprise was favored with moderate weather for that season of the year, so much so that to us aboard the submarine it was more like a pleasure voyage than an earnest cruise. Indeed, we ran light during the entire trip, and at such a rate of speed that we overtook the tug with her cumbersome tow, and were able to go aboard and exchange notes. A submarine traveling light is practically as comfortable as any ocean-going ship. The uninitiated are apt to confuse the two terms of submarine navigation, "light" and "awash." A modern submarine traveling "light" has her deck exposed, and her ventilators and conning-tower constantly open. She therefore has both sunlight and air, and travels with her Diesels, or heavy oil-burning engines, only. Running "awash," her deck is almost submerged, until nothing but the top of her conning tower is visible, and for all purposes of comfort she might nearly as well be completely submerged.

We were, therefore, very grateful for unruffled seas and days of sparkling sunshine, as we slipped at full speed into the tropical waters, after deciding to leave the tug and tow to make the best progress they could. We hoped to locate the wreck of the *Esperanza* before the surface boats arrived.

In due time we drew near the spot that had proven so tragic to me, and all the men off duty were animatedly pointing toward the familiar headlands of Martinique. We were all of us buoyed up by the prospects of decent weather, and filled with confidence. And then of a sudden we made a shocking discovery that damped all our hopes and filled us with foreboding.

“Craft of some sort on the port bow, sir,” called the man on lookout on the tiny bridge, and all of us strained our eyes in the direction indicated. From that distance it was but faintly discernible and through the glasses we could not make out what she was. The troublesome part consisted in the certainty that she was not steaming, or, if so, was moving at an imperceptible rate of speed. Scarcely any smoke appeared above her funnels. Moreover, she appeared to be in almost exactly the spot for which we were making. From the deck of the average liner, a submarine of our size, cruising light, should be visible for at least ten or twelve miles at sea on such a day, and for purposes of inspection those aboard a liner would have a most decided advantage owing to their height above the surface of the water. Had it not been for this, I should have submerged until we could draw down upon and inspect this strange vessel before those aboard her became aware of our presence; but being convinced that we had probably been sighted some time before, we proceeded under full speed toward her. As we brought her above the horizon in constantly clearing view, we made out that she was fitted with enormous cranes, and was, undoubtedly, a salvage boat of a late type. Ungainly, ugly, monstrous, and powerful, she looked

like a square steel fortress on the surface of the sea, and was not under way. If she had succeeded in finding the *Esperanza*, and had grappled thereto, we were helpless; for the salvage must then be hers by right of location.

"Well, Tom, it looks like some one has beat us to it, and as far as this job is concerned, we are done," I heard Jimmy, who was standing behind me, exclaim, in a voice of profound hopelessness.

"It looks that way," I assented gloomily. "She is standing still now, but that's no proof that she was not fumbling around trying to locate the wreck when she sighted us. If that's so, we still have more than an equal chance of grabbing the prize."

We stood just forward of the conning-tower, and could hear the angry or disappointed comments of the men abaft, who, like ourselves, were for the moment discouraged.

The decks of the wrecker were well covered with men, who lined her nearest rail as we reduced speed and in the quiet sea ran fairly close to her. She appeared formidable. Her cranes were inordinately large, suggesting great power, and there was an enormous overhang at her stern, where was a platform, presumably equipped for direct grappling. I ordered out our collapsible boat, launched it, and with two men at the oars, pulled over to the *Gretchen*, the unwelcome ship. Her side ladders were down, and, as I approached, the huge, distorted figure of a diver appeared from the surface of the sea, dripping like some big fish that was being hauled aboard, and was hoisted upward to a steel platform that projected from the strake. The thumping of an air pump stopped, and we could hear the conversation of her crew in undertone, as if they had been cautioned by their commander. I hailed and asked if I might come aboard, was given permission, and in a dead silence climbed the steps. I asked the first man I met where the ship's master was; but he did n't seem to understand, and a voice from up

above answered, mockingly, "The ship's commander is up here, Captain Thomas Hale."

I lifted my eyes, looked up to the bridge, and there, leaning across the rail on his elbows and calmly staring at me, stood Count Waldo von Vennemann. I stood, momentarily transfixed with anger. This man seemed forever to baulk me at every important turn in my life. He had robbed me of the only woman I had ever loved; he had robbed me of the only steamship I had ever owned; he had robbed me of my only chance to make, by one venture, a moderate fortune, and now had come to rob me of the salvage money to be obtained from the very ship which he had sent to the bottom. In that moment I could have cursed him, as he stood there above me, with a grin of enjoyment at my discomfiture. But he was possessed of too much breeding, or, at least, of too much discipline, to betray his triumph by boorish means. Perhaps he thought it would afford him more enjoyment to witness my discomfiture while he played the part of suave host. He suddenly straightened himself to naval attitude and saluted me. I came to my senses, brought my heels together as punctiliously as had he, and returned his salute exactly as if we were still officers in naval service, and then advanced toward him. He came down from the bridge steps to greet me, apologizing as he did so.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, in his fluent English, devoid of gutturals. "I had not expected to entertain a visitor of rank. It is rather a surprise that we should meet here on the spot again, and under such circumstances. I believe the last time we were here it was I who was in a submarine and you in a surface vessel, was it not? I almost forget."

We confronted each other, neither of us extending his hand, aware that we were enemies, and must always be, and looking a veiled challenge into each other's eyes. I flatter myself that the tone I adopted was as suave as his own.

"A man of so many affairs as Count Waldo von Venne-

mann must undoubtedly forget incidents of much more importance to others. Myself, for instance. But I am surprised to see such a distinguished officer of the former German Navy a mere master of a salvage ship. It scarcely seems fitting to such a career."

I think the shot went home; for his somewhat florid face flushed a trifle before he replied:

"Oh, even a Prussian nobleman, or a former commander in His Imperial Majesty's Navy, can use such a satisfying sum of money as was lost aboard the *Esperanza*, which you commanded, Commander Hale."

I knew that he used the title of my previous naval rank maliciously, and I am not certain that in this exchange of sarcasm he did not have the best of it; for if he had resigned from a naval service to become a wrecker, it was equally certain that I, too, was no longer wearing the uniform of my country's Navy. He became aware that some of his men had moved toward us, and stood within hearing, and with that brusqueness which characterizes Prussian commands, turned and barked a brutal order to them in German to be gone about their own business. And like men who had served in Prussian service, they slunk away, for all the world like dogs with tails between their legs. He turned toward me, and again was the well-mannered man speaking to an equal.

"But this is no way to greet an old" — he almost said "friend," but caught himself — "acquaintance, after so long separation. We must at least celebrate our return to a common scene by that courtesy which I believe prevails aboard mercantile ships at sea. May I have the honor of conducting you to my cabin?"

For an instant I was inclined to refuse, but decided that I should gain nothing by slapping him in the face, and so agreed. I am still thankful that I did not accept the drink which he proffered after we entered his quarters and seated ourselves. I glanced about me, and observed that he was still a sybarite in the fittings of his surroundings. Among

other furnishings of his cabin aboard this ugly wrecking ship was a beautiful old dresser, on the top of which, arranged with much precision by his steward, was spread out a gold toilet set, and, exactly in the center of the same, the ornately framed photograph of Marty that I had seen that day in his cabin aboard the submarine, where I, wet and dripping, changed my clothes. I could not look at it, for it seemed to me that if ever a glorious woman had fallen a sacrifice, this was the one. I wondered if she, marooned in some half-decrepit castle in Germany, was at that moment speculating over the possibilities of his success, and whether she had children who talked to her in his tongue, so alien to her. Alien? Probably not by this time, for within three or four years even the language of the mind can alter and fit itself to habitual surroundings. Hastily I shifted my eyes, lest I give him another opportunity to gloat over my numerous defeats at his hands.

"Ah, you are still a teetotaller, I observe," he was saying, as he stood with his back to me, replacing a decanter of whiskey on a tiny sideboard. "I have always considered that one of the faults of the American Navy."

I could have leaped to my feet and broken his jaw for that slur, and should have derived much satisfaction from kicking him in his ribs in case he fell, a satisfaction which doubtless our primitive ancestors attained when they bashed out some fellow cave man's brains with a club. I had not come to his cabin to afford him pleasure. I was not there to waste time, and with total disregard for diplomacy I addressed him bluntly:

"Of course you came here to salvage my ship?"

"Certainly," he answered. "Why not? She is outside the limit. She was uninsured, and there is a pretty well-defined understanding in such cases as this that, as you Americans say, it is the early bird that catches the worm. I am here to catch mine."

The mask was off. There was no further pretense of friendship, and we glared at each other in mutual ani-

mosity. For a moment we stood thus, and as if luck had changed a little in my favor, there came to my acute ears voices of two men talking outside. In the silence that pervaded the ship as she lay there, motionless, and without hum or drone of working machinery or engines, what they said was distinctly audible. I was thankful in that moment for my knowledge of the German tongue.

"It is my opinion, just the same, that we are at least a mile to the westward of where the *Esperanza* went down," declared one of the men to another, as if in the midst of an argument.

For me it was a speech of portent, and it was my turn to lift my eyes to von Vennemann and grin. He had jumped hastily to his feet as if to rush to the bridge and order silence; but, knowing full well that I had heard, he instantly settled back in his chair and waited for me to speak.

"It seems," I said mockingly, "that up to this moment your efforts have not been attended with any great success. Of course had you located the wreck of my ship and pur your mark thereon by way of a buoy, you would be in possession; but, as it is, it has become now an open question as to which one of us will first attach thereto."

"You think so?" he asked, with a sneer. "You must not be so certain of that, although you have gained some knowledge by eavesdropping."

"That's a lie, and you know it," I said, starting to my feet. "Eavesdropping, I will say, for your enlightenment, implies a deliberate attempt to overhear what others are saying; not an accident of overheard conversation."

He, too, got to his feet, and for a moment we confronted each other in extreme anger; but I think that his sober sense cautioned him to avoid physical contact, for he must have known that had it occurred, I need scarcely have exerted myself to vanquish him. He was brave enough, for all that, promptly to utter his defiance.

"You can do as you like about it, but I will give you

a warning, Captain Hale! If you think I left Germany and put all the money I could gather together into outfitting this expedition, only to have you, or anybody else, take it away from me, you are a fool. You have come here with a submarine to try to locate the wreck of the *Esperanza*. You have no arms — any more than I have. The Peace Settlements would see to that. You can't take the gold from under us with that submarine, and I will give you warning that any man who has fought through a war as I have, and has men aboard his ship who know what he is after, will have no hesitancy whatever in sinking you to put you out of this business."

To emphasize his declaration he coupled it with broad German oaths, as he added: "I am going to locate and salvage the gold off the *Esperanza*. If you interfere I will ram you and send you to the bottom, just as sure as the sky is above us and the sea beneath us, so you can take that for what it is worth. This game is too big to be hampered by either sympathies, morals, or maritime laws. I will give you just one hour in which to clear from here, and after that I will do the best I can to sink you. Also, for information, whether you believe it or not, I will tell you that I can do twenty knots an hour, with this boat we are on, and that foreseeing complications, she is armed with a steel ram."

I whirled on my heels, and started for his cabin door, without further waste of time.

"Good," I exclaimed; "that clears the situation. It is a private war between you and me?"

"Exactly," he said, "with just one hour's truce."

I walked rapidly from his cabin down the bridge to the side ladder and my boat. He had dropped the rôle of host, and did not grant me the courtesy of following. I stepped into my boat and was rowed back to the submarine, and in exactly twenty-five minutes after our declaration of war had turned northward, still running light and at full speed, and was rapidly dropping Count Vennemann's boat behind. She made no attempt to follow us, nor was there

even a curl of smoke above her when we dropped her below the horizon. But I swore that if he wanted a private war he should have it, and already I had begun formulating my plans.

CHAPTER XXI

MY own anger with Count von Vennemann was as nothing compared with Jimmy's when I detailed to him the conversation which had taken place.

"I wish we had a Whitehead torpedo aboard, and a tube," the engineer declared wrathfully.

"You don't mean to say that you would favor sinking him, do you?" I asked.

"Certainly I would; that's what he did to us aboard the *Esperanza*, was n't it?"

"Yes, but to give the devil his due he did n't try to murder us until we proved to be armed and ready to fight."

"Then," said Jimmy, "I suppose we shall have to fight him with kid gloves, much as I should like to down him and his whole crew."

"Kid gloves, if you wish to call it that," I retorted, obstinately; "but I think I have a method which will effectually put him out of business, and at the same time will not leave us to feel that we have deliberately murdered any one."

"Well, fire away, and let's hear what your scheme is," Jimmy said, somewhat sullenly; but long before I had finished a discourse of my plans and proposals he was as enthusiastic as I.

"The scheme will work," he declared, "I know it will, and it has the advantage of giving us the opportunity to laugh at this fool who thinks he has got it all his own way, and has chased us off the ground. Can I talk to any of the men about it?"

"Certainly," I assented. "This expedition is being run more or less on shares, and the men should be told. We

have not a man aboard whom we can't trust, for even that expert the Bellairs people gave us is just as eager to make money as any man I ever met."

After giving orders to keep a sharp lookout for the tug-boat with her convoy, I went below to my charts, and put in several hours laying my plans. When I returned on deck I knew by the hilarity of the entire crew that Jimmy had lost no time in imparting to them the details, not only concerning what had taken place, but all that we proposed to do. There was no mistaking the truth that I had their whole-hearted support in my enterprise.

We came up abreast the tug and barges at four o'clock in the afternoon, and directed them to run into the bay near the little village with which they were familiar, and where for so long we had been marooned after the loss of the *Esperanza*. We aboard the *Hector* hastened to a tiny bay which Jimmy and I had visited many times during our stay in Martinique. We reached there at low tide, ran gently up on a shallow, sloping, sandy bottom, let the water into our aft ballast tanks, thus bringing our forward gear into a surface reach, and made necessary adjustments. Under Jimmy's supervision, the entire crew of the submarine, myself included, worked like beavers to get the task accomplished before the rise of the tide, which must float us off. Darkness was almost upon us when we made our last adjustment and were in readiness. By this time the tide had lifted until the slight bumping of the bottom in the fore part of the *Hector* warned us that we must back off at once. With all on board we slowly gave her power from the Diesels, drew into the clear in an angular position, then emptied our ballast tanks, and running light, cruised westward until the lights of Count von Vennemann's ship had been picked up. We then ran submerged, directing our course through the periscope until we had reached a point where we feared we might be observed, after which we dropped into the sea to a depth of seven fathoms, and slowly crept forward upon our prey.

I have hitherto neglected to explain the alterations and improvements we had effected in the submarine under Jimmy's supervision.

The bow of the average submarine is nearly pointed. Ours partook more of the form of a cruiser. There was an interlocking false bow for the sole purpose of offering water cleavage and steerage when cruising. This was removable by the releasing of interior clutches in exactly the same way that the heavy keel of the regulation submarine may be released from inside in emergencies when the boat reaches too great a point of submergence, and must, therefore, relieve itself of all possible dead weight in order to recover its buoyancy.

This false prow, when released, left the *Hector* as blunt a fore-front as could have been found in any old-fashioned Dutch boat; not square, it is true, but so nearly so as to be semicircular. The dropping of this false prow also brought into exposure as adroit a mechanical appliance as had ever been conceived for such a purpose.

A battery of five hollow tubes, each operating independently and capable of being withdrawn or extended, with a play of four feet, were equipped on the ends with ingenious clutches, manipulated by latticed extensors in the centers of the tubes, and acting at their termini like pinchers which could be opened or shut at will. These in turn, by a manipulation of the rods controlling them, could at the ends be given a play of some inches in each direction. So perfect was their working that it was possible to perform even delicate manipulations, such as the tying of a knot or the unscrewing of a nut. Immediately above this battery of arms and fingers was a single shaft of finest steel, equipped at the end with a drill, and capable of being driven with the full force of our motors at very high revolutions. In our private tests we had actually drilled through a six-inch plate of semi-hardened steel in as short a time as the operation could have been performed by a power drill in a machine-shop. The drill shaft was given

greater play from the fact that it could be uncoupled from the engines and withdrawn almost its length. In actual operation it projected fully two feet beyond the battery of arms beneath it. A hawse hole led into a compartment immediately behind the central arm, and in this was coiled a heavy steel cable with an automatic clutch on the end, so that when bent into a loop the clutch, coming into contact with the cable, would automatically lock itself around it. Inside the compartment where the cable was coiled were two powerful shears, so arranged that in emergency, if it became necessary to release ourselves from the cable, it could instantly be cut. The levers and switches manipulating all these devices were in a tiny compartment immediately behind the bow. Directly above the battery of arms, and the drill shaft over them, was fixed Jimmy's submarine searchlight. This he had so improved that he was able to control its powers and at will obtain a beam of light that was dispersed at a distance varying from a few yards up to five hundred. The light did not penetrate through steel unless placed immediately against it. Hence an object even a few feet away became opaque. This light, as I have heretofore explained, was invisible to the eye unless the observer were equipped with glasses to provide the rays of the spectrum that had been eliminated by Jimmy's method of segregating rays of light into their component parts, and either reducing or intensifying certain colors.

We could not be certain that von Vennemann had not supplied himself with at least a few high-explosives depth bombs, and therefore knew the risk we were taking, and that everything depended on our ability to accomplish the work we had to do without being discovered; for the destructive radius of a modern depth bomb is seventy feet. In the event of such discovery our fate was practically determined, and it afforded us no satisfaction to feel that if he blew us up he also ran the risk of seriously damaging his own craft. Nor had I any hope that in case we were

sunk, and succeeded in coming to the surface in our emergency suits, he would have the pity to rescue any of us from the sea. I was convinced that the man was more or less a modern German pirate, who thoroughly believed in the axiom of the ancient pirate that "dead men tell no tales." It might be conjectured, therefore, with what anxiety we men aboard the *Hector* took our stations for so hazardous an attempt.

We had dropped our false prow, with a buoy attached, in the tiny bay off Martinique, and were fully prepared for action. Jimmy and I took our posts in the forward compartment, Jimmy at the light, and I surrounded by the maze of levers and connections with which to manipulate the drill and fantastic arms in front of me. We moved at a snail's pace and with the utmost caution through the water, both Jimmy and I wearing the monstrous goggles that would enable us to see through the steel and follow the beam of light that directed our course. A weird and uncanny sight opened to our view. The searchlight appeared as a pillar of fluorescent green, pallid and ghostly in its effect. Looking immediately in front of me it did not appear that there were any connections at all, but out at the ends, rods, tubes, and shafts were visible like objects that swam perpetually ahead of us. Once or twice I had the unpleasant feeling that we, ourselves, were actually in the water with nothing to intervene and save us from drowning. On the little platform above me, where he knelt in front of his apparatus, I could hear Jimmy continually making adjustments with the sharp clicking of shutters and switches, each accompanied by a note as rasping and deafening as if we were surrounded by the crackling sounds of a thousand wireless instruments feverishly at work.

Although we were traveling at seven fathoms depth, it seemed impossible that this prodigious sound should not be audible to a watchman, though half asleep, aboard the craft which we were bent on attacking. Nor did I have

any doubt that even the slow hum of our motors might be audible. Any man sitting at a submarine telephone aboard von Vennemann's boat could have picked up the sound of our approach; but, secure in his egotism and thereby rendered confident that he was far removed from danger, I am certain that nothing more than a careless watch was maintained by this ex-naval officer of the German Navy. It is very probable, too, that we were assisted in our attack by the earliness of the hour; for his ship, being lavishly lighted, was undoubtedly turning her dynamos with a hum that might have drowned any other noise in her engine-rooms. Of the light itself we had no fear, and although aware that when we came closer to the surface the extreme top of our conning-tower might show, we trusted to the enormous overhanging platform aft to assist us in avoiding detection.

Thinking over all the risks we ran, and the possibility that our intricate appliances, when put to the actual test, might fail us, I was staring ahead, absent-mindedly, into that pallid, constantly shifting and advancing pathway of green, when we sighted our prey. At the same moment I felt Jimmy's hand reach down and pinch me on the shoulder to give me warning, for verbal communication between us was impossible. My instructions to the man at the controls had been complete, and I knew that he was sitting in front of his levers and gauges with the two telephone-receivers to his ears, alert and expectant. I therefore spoke into the telephone transmitter in front of me, and instantly felt a change in the vibrations of the boat. The floor beneath us took on an acute angle, and I knew that we were rising on a long plane, slowly but surely, as the hydroplanes forward fought the water's resistance. We stopped our engines and moved forward sedately under our own way, for all the world as easily as an aeroplane alters its course through the air. The gauges in front of me indicated that our periscope, had we not collapsed it, would now be protruding above the water, and that the

top of our conning-tower must be within no more than a fathom from the surface. Ahead of us and above us loomed the ungainly hull, broad and massive, of the wrecking ship. So tideless was the sea that she had no anchors down. Fortunately for us we were coming upward astern and had no need to start our motors to attain a fair position. A single little kick of the propellers gave us way enough, and anxiously we waited for the *Hector* to come to a stop. She did so, neatly, as if endowed with intelligence and cognizant of our plans. Details of the structure of the hull above us came into view. We were now lying at a very acute angle with our stern low down in the water, and our blunt prow with its mechanism pointed upward. Directly in front of us could be seen the rudders of the wrecker, and on each side her two propellers, the bronze of which gleamed dully in the rays of light that were thrown full upon them. Another single cautious turn of our own propellers brought us to a halt before we came in collision and left us almost in contact with the first screw. It had now come my turn to act with the machinery, to which I had accustomed myself while making our preliminary preparations in that quiet little cove on Long Island Sound, now so far away. It was a new experience, and somewhat nervously I caught the screws and clutches that would thrust forward the sharp, diamond-pointed drill. It did not come true to the mark and for a moment I fumbled with other adjustments before catching the right one, and then saw the drill slowly press forward until it caught the propeller keys, against which it thrust savagely. I called to the engine-room for power, and instantly the polished steel shaft in front of me responded and the drill began to bite. It took but a few minutes, driven by the slow pressure of our screws behind, to rip through the toughened bronze above, and yet in that time it seemed to me incredible that an untoward sound should not penetrate through to the ears of some watchful engineer aboard von Vennemann's boat. I withdrew the drill, and sought its

second mark, which would make the unshipping of the propeller certain, and with frantic haste drove it home, while it seemed ages before it accomplished its work. Staring in front of me, I saw the two great holes that would so weaken the clutches of the propeller upon its shaft that it must either break or fall off the instant power was applied to it, and was conscious of reckless exultation. From the little platform above me a hand reached down and patted my shoulder, proving to me that Jimmy had endured as nervous an interval as I, and was equally elated. Cautiously we manoeuvred again down there in the depths astern, and repeated our performance, fearing every moment lest we be discovered and defeated; but nothing disturbed us, and there was not a sign of alarm. Yet, as we destroyed the second propeller of Count von Vennemann's boat, there was the same dread, constant and almost overpowering, that there might come a sudden explosion from without to end at least the lives of Jimmy and myself, for we two were in the position of greatest hazard. Nothing could save us, although the others might stand some chance of escape. I had one flashing thought of the suspense of all those men crowded aboard the *Hector* behind us, prepared for swift death or a desperate struggle to escape annihilation. We at least had the advantage of occupation and activity, whereas they must stand and wait.

It was not necessary to alter our position for the rest of our task, which was to securely fasten the cable through the rudder chains and posts of the wrecker that loomed above us; but in this I bungled so badly through excitement that the inventor himself came to my rescue, dropped down to the pit beside me, crowded me out of the way, and with his own hands manipulated the flexible fingers with which I had struggled so aimlessly. I stood erect behind him, staring over his shoulder as his hands moved definitely and purposely, without loss of motion, direct to each of the appliances which he had created. I saw the central arm, which held the end of the cable with its

automatic lock, force the end behind the rudder chain, withdraw, catch it from the other side, carry it forward to a rudder post, thence onward to another rudder post, withdraw it, catch it in its steel fingers, pull it farther around another chain and then back to the cable itself, where for a time it fumbled clumsily before reaching its appointed place and clasping down, after which the huge, tempered, and waiting jaws of the lock came to direct contact and snapped viciously shut as if clutching hold forever. Twisted Jimmy straightened up with as triumphant an air as was ever portrayed upon a man's face and looked at me; but I saw that drops of sweat were trickling down his face and that his lips were twitching from the strain he had undergone. To him it had meant either failure or success in a vital degree, and failure would have been to him almost as great a catastrophe as paralysis of his own hand. For an instant we stood thus, by our looks congratulating each other, and then he leaped to the little platform above, switched off the light, and removed the deafeners from his ears. I did likewise.

"Tommy, old boy," he shouted, exultantly, "we have got him! Got him just as sure as anything could ever be got! It worked! Worked, I tell you, just as I said it would. It is the greatest invention of its kind that has ever been made in this world. Its only failure is —"

I surmised that he was on the verge of leading into a long technical criticism of his work and the possibilities of improvement thereon, regardless of the fact that at any moment some one above might by accident discover our presence, and immediately take steps to exterminate us.

"For Heaven's sake," I exclaimed, "we are not out of it yet! Wait until we get into the clear to tell me all this stuff." And I left him standing there in the midst of the maze of equipment and ran back to the control station, where with my own hands I opened the valves of the forward ballast tanks, those amidships, and the equalizers astern, until we were submerged to full thirty fathoms, at

which depth we should be in comparative safety. Instructing Binks, the expert, to back off, maintaining that depth for full thirty yards, I returned to the compartment forward where I could hear the steady unwinding of the steel towline from its shell. With a smooth, pleasant evenness, it passed through the hawse hole with never a kink or tug, and I signaled again to continue our progress more slowly until it had reached its length. I stood there until I felt the first pull of the *Hector*, as she took the strain, and then both Jimmy and I hurried amidships, where I set the pumps working and stood in front of the gauges until we emerged.

We were compelled to undergo another critical moment in which we must learn whether or not Count Vennemann had armed his ship. Under the newly imposed international laws this should have been impossible; but his lawlessness, as expressed to me in conversation, led me to fear the possibility that he might be carrying guns aboard that would prove extremely hazardous to us in case he used them while we were on the surface. I therefore put the *Hector* awash with nothing more than her conning-tower exposed and gave the signal to move ahead. The sea was still very smooth when I opened the conning-tower hatch and looked through it. The night above us was a pit of blackness, dimly illuminated by stars. Count von Vennemann's ship lay exactly as I had last seen her, like a huge black reef, or a tiny island, projecting above the water. She was yet a very well-lighted island, on the top of which men passed lazily to and fro before retiring. Jimmy crowded up the side of the conning-tower, and I made room for him on the tiny ladder, where we stood with our heads exposed and observing our prey. There was not a sound to be heard from the depth of the *Hector* below us, and the night was very still. Floating across the quiet water we could actually hear the guttural conversation of two men who passed aft until they stood on the overhanging platform so curiously constructed above the stern of the

wrecker. One of them laughed boisterously, and the night was so calm that when he struck a match to light his pipe he did not have to shield it with his hand. I hoped very fervently that it was Count von Vennemann himself, whom I was about to surprise by the unexpected. Very careless they must have been; for otherwise I did n't well see how, being trained men, they could have escaped discovering the menacing shape that lay astern of them, prepared for most unusual hostilities.

"Had n't you better go below, Jimmy?" I asked. "If they have a gun aboard we shall find it out within a few minutes, and if they make a fluke hit the first shot might catch us before we could submerge."

"Go below? Not me, Tommy," he replied, with total disregard of my position as his superior officer, and using the diminutive with an affectionate familiarity: "We started together, more or less, we have stuck together more than less, and I'll be hanged if I am not going to stick it out by your side and see what happens."

"All right," I said, "here goes." And turning my head I called to the man at the controls below for quarter speed astern.

Running under power from our accumulators I knew that we could not exert our full force nor anything comparable to that which we could utilize once we dared to run light and use the Diesels. But in the latter case I knew that the horse power we were able to employ would probably be equivalent if not superior to anything that Vennemann's ship might turn out. I heard from beneath me the moaning hum of the motors and then we took the full strain. For a moment I felt the *Hector* swinging her head this way and that, as if eager to be off, and impatient of the burden behind her, and then called for full speed. The strain increased until I could feel her hull vibrate with hampered energy. Then, quite gradually it eased off, gave, and I knew that we were under way, and heading toward water so deep that our victim's anchors

could not save her if she let them go. The two men who had been taking a short promenade backward and forward on the aft deck of the wrecker were plainly visible and for a few minutes no one aboard the captured craft seemed aware that she was in tow.

CHAPTER XXII

THE two men aboard the wrecker were suddenly startled into a most amusing activity. One of them ran to the rail, looked over, shouted something, and together they raced to the platform aft and looked down into the water, which by this time was beginning to curl ahead of them as, under the sturdy pull of the *Hector*, she was getting under full headway. It was as if a spell had been broken; for now we could hear loud cries, and men seemed to swarm aft from all directions. They ran pell-mell, this way and that, some to the rails, some forward, and one man even began to climb one of the stumpy masts, as if hoping from that altitude to discover what had bewitched their ship.

"They'll start their engines now," chuckled Jimmy, and I hastily ordered our own power shut off. We then reversed for a short distance, to give full slack to the tow-line, lest the cable, being tight, although midway between the two damaged propellers, be accidentally struck by one of the huge pieces as it broke away, thus cutting our line.

It was not a moment too soon, for immediately afterward Vennemann's ship turned her engines. She wavered for an instant, and then began to draw ahead.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Jimmy, anxiously, as he stood by me. "Suppose she does n't lose her screws?"

"But she will," I declared confidently; "she must. Wait till she tries full speed ahead." And then I called down to the man beneath and told him to go ahead at very slow

speed. Before I could lift my head Jimmy gave an exultant yell.

“She’s lost one,” he roared, and looking out I saw that the wrecker was yawning badly, indicating that her starboard screw had given way, parted from the shaft, and dropped into the sea.

“We’ll have to take a chance on the other screw cutting our cable,” I declared, “lest we foul our own propellers.” I gave orders for full speed and the *Hector*, with her wheel thrown so that we could swing our towline well out to starboard of the crippled ship, thus reducing the danger of a cut towline as much as possible, began to swing; but before this manœuvre was more than under way the second screw of the wrecker gave, and now the shouts from her rose to a confused yell. Instantly we altered our course, until again we took the full strain on the tow, enduring in the meantime considerable suspense concerning the safety of our line. We gradually increased speed, until it was being tested to the utmost, and convinced us then that it had been unscathed by the fall of the big pieces of bronze. Aboard the wrecker a powerful shaft of white light came into being, swept through the air, and like the lash of a whip thrown from the heavens above us, struck with blinding intensity. They had brought a searchlight into play from the platform astern. Hastily we closed the hatch of the conning-tower, and submerged a little deeper into the water, deliberately leaving but a portion of the top, which would afford but a small target, exposed, so that we might learn whether the *Gretchen* was armed. She tried her anchors, and they failed to reach bottom. For a full half-hour we ran thus, waiting in suspense for the sound of an explosion near us; but none came, and again we cautiously emerged and opened the hatch. Scarcely had we done so when an impotent volley of rifle bullets spattered against us. I decided to come completely to the surface, where we could use our Diesels.

Under this new power we forged steadily ahead through

the night with the searchlights still upon us, and for a long time, until assured of the futility of rifle-fire, the men aboard the *Gretchen* kept up an aimless bombardment. We now swung eastward, until we had cleared the Point des Salines, off Martinique, and reached the open Atlantic, where we set our course due north, and those of us who were off watch calmly retired.

When I awoke it was broad daylight, and the sun was shining brilliantly over the surface of the sea. My first glance at the *Gretchen* showed me that her men were working doggedly at some makeshift contrivance on the platform astern, whose use I could not for a time conjecture, and then I discovered that they were evidently planning an apparatus by which they evidently hoped to grapple the tow, attach it to one of their powerful cranes, drag the line upward until it could be taken on by the winches, and then haul us into close or fighting quarters. There were two ways of stopping them, one by maintaining a steady rifle fire with the half-dozen rifles which luckily happened to be aboard the *Hector*, and the other to run such a bluff on Vennemann as to chill his enterprise. With but one man to assist me, and sheltered behind the armored conning-tower, I made my way out to the deck of the *Hector*, and elevated our wireless mast. During the whole of this proceeding they fired at us constantly, and one of the bullets, by some strange deflection, cut through the sleeve of my coat. We then retreated to the interior, where I went to the wireless room, and called the *Gretchen* until I got a response. I sent this message:

Count von Vennemann. If you do not immediately remove everything from the platform at the stern of your ship, and cease firing at us, also cut loose both anchors, I will torpedo you. For your information I will say that I have six first-class torpedoes aboard, and am equipped with double tubes. If you think I am not in earnest I will recall to your mind that you torpedoed my ship remorselessly in these very waters, that the men who compose my crew are the same ones who were aboard that ship, and

that there is not a man who would not take extreme delight in sending you to the bottom. I give you just ten minutes in which to begin dismantling your platform. No other warning will be given.

Of course it was sheer bluff, but I was depending upon the psychology of my opponent to swallow it whole. I knew that he would regard the situation as it would be if reversed, and was convinced that, had the situation been reversed, and with torpedoes aboard, he would have had no compunction whatever in using them. Furthermore, he was in no position to judge whether we did have torpedoes. Although in emergency we could cut our towline, and leave him derelict in the open sea, this did not at all answer my purpose, because I wished to make certain of his removal from any further interference in our proposed salvage expedition.

There was a wait of not more than three or four minutes, before this reply came back over the wireless:

In case I accede to your demands, what do you propose to do with us?

I snapped back the following:

I propose to take you to a point of safety, but shall promise nothing more. Five minutes are up. You have but five more in which to act.

In exactly nine minutes after my first ultimatum I saw from the top of the conning-tower his men swarming aft and beginning the work of dismembering the contrivance through which he had hoped to humble me. Swinging out to the side we saw the ends of the anchor chains slip from their channels into the sea. My bluff had won. Furthermore, as if to assure me that he had completely surrendered, he ran up a white flag astern. Fearing treachery, however, none of us ventured out upon the deck of the *Hector* until well along in the afternoon. Our fears proved groundless, for not a shot was fired. The crew of the *Gretchen* wandered aimlessly about the decks,

like sullen, discontented animals, imprisoned, and very plainly I could see von Vennemann himself tramping angrily to and fro on his bridge, the picture of discomfiture. The sight gave me much pleasure. It was he who had thrown the challenge. He had wanted a fight and had got it in the most unexpected way.

At about $16^{\circ} 7' N.$, $61^{\circ} 5' W.$, off the Leeward Islands are what is known as the Petite Terre keys and shoals, an intricate and seldom visited group of islands off the eastern coast of Guadeloupe. The nearest port to them of any importance is Pointe-à-Pitre, some thirty miles to the westward. These islands were my destination, for among them I determined to maroon the *Gretchen* with her crew. She drew thirty-four feet of water, whereas the *Hector*, running light, drew but twelve feet, giving an advantage in draft of twenty-two feet. A study of my charts, with which we were perfectly equipped, disclosed the fact that there was a passage in the very middle of the keys through which the *Hector* could pass with ease, but upon which the *Gretchen* must ground herself. I had calculated the tides to a nicety for my purpose, and found that the time would prove fairly opportune for my purpose, extreme high tide being at about eight o'clock in the evening, which would leave me, after my purpose was accomplished, sufficient light to make my somewhat tortuous way in safety through the maze of islands and shoals, and reach the open sea before utter blackness intervened. We had to slow down to time our arrival with this tide, and for some hours barely sauntered through the water, on which we had not sighted a single sail.

I do not think that up to the very last moment Count von Vennemann had the remotest idea of what I proposed to do; but when the group of tropical islands came into sight on that beautiful southern evening, he must have believed that I was going to display toward him a most unexpected generosity, by taking him into some fine port of refuge where he could begin his machinations anew.

I was not such a fool, nor was there the slightest tinge of kindliness in my heart for this man who had thwarted me so frequently, and had at last proven anything but a fair sportsman; for the sportsmanship of the seas is, after all, as well defined in its rules of conduct as any that were ever inaugurated upon land. Indeed, I thought I was treating him with remarkable leniency, and still think so. It was not until we had entered the maze of islands that he exhibited any signs of alarm, and then he signaled us to go to the wireless. I was too busy with manœuvring the ship to respond to it, but Twisted Jimmy, who had picked up much of the art, went below with a grin on his face to hear the count's protestations:

Be careful where you are taking us. You will put us aground. We draw thirty-four feet.

We knew that as well as you do, damn you,

Jimmy somewhat painfully snapped back to him, and I read the message from where I stood on the temporary bridge from which we were steering, and knew that it was time for all of us to get off the deck. I gave orders and we did so with remarkable celerity; but not before the count, at last alive to our intentions, had himself tried to pot a few of us with a rifle, which he had evidently seized from his chart-house. Knowing that we were armored heavily enough to be in no danger from his somewhat aimless anger, we let him expend his wrath before again sending him a message, which read:

You can't injure us by displaying the temper of a spanked child, and if you continue we shall take precautions to insure that your position is not improved.

In response to this he re-hoisted the white flag, which some one had pulled down, and it took no very strong imagination on my part to picture his angry humiliation.

We came to a landmark that was clearly indicated, and knew that we were within a mile of the point where the end of our tow would be reached, and now gave the

Hector full speed ahead, until she was tearing through the water with her towline taut as a rigid bar of steel. Naturally we were taking chances too, for the charts were of more than three years' age, and there were possibilities that the depth of water above the shoals was no longer what it had been prior to the war. The light was still sufficiently strong, so that we could observe through the clear water the increasing shallowness, and every man on watch stood waiting breathlessly for commands. We threw ourselves forward across the shoals, straining to the utmost, and then I ordered half-speed, and gave the signal for cutting the towline with the automatic shears. We could neither hear nor feel the vicious click with which they did their work; but when I rang for speed again the *Hector* bounded forward as if glad to be liberated from the drag, and I knew that we were free. Again we slowed down, while the huge bulk of the *Gretchen* rushed forward under her own impetus to the climax. For a moment she seemed bent on overtaking us, and riding us down. And then, so abruptly that she reeled from stem to stern, her stubby masts and huge cranes wavering in the air and trembling with the impact, she jambed herself heavily into the sands beneath. She appeared to stagger as from a blow, while men on her decks were thrown from their feet. She struggled forward still farther, as if stricken to death, and came to a full stop. A chorus of angry shouts came to our ears, and the *Gretchen*'s crew acted like a lot of madmen, shaking their fists and screaming impotently, and again I saw von Vennemann, distraught, running out on the bridge with a rifle in his hand. We sheltered ourselves behind the conning-tower and laughed. The bullets ripped the water about us in a fusillade as other men joined him, until they were firing volleys at us. We could afford to laugh. The space between us widened, and the islands on either side seemed to drop their austerity and to assume a pleased appearance, as if participating in this human joke. Behind us, as immov-

able as the islands, the shape of the crippled, grounded *Gretchen*, driven solidly upward upon the shoals, lost definition and became but a black, ugly blur, that was slowly swallowed in the shades of dusk. We crept forward more cautiously, taking soundings now and then to insure ourselves against a similar disaster, twisting and turning, dodging here and there, perpetually conning our way until we reached the open sea, and with immense jubilance turned our nose southward toward our rendezvous with the barge.

In due time, and without mishap, we entered the little cove where the tug and her convoy waited us. So convinced had all the waiting men been of our ability to carry through our strange task, they had not so much as worried about us. Some of them had been ashore, visiting friends in the little port, where, as shipwrecked mariners, we had waited until the *Queen of the Seas* came along to take us from the island.

We lost no time in setting forth for our salvage endeavor, and came to deep anchorage over almost exactly the place where, to our then consternation, the *Gretchen* had been found; but over her we had the vast advantage of Jimmy's invention in our quest for the wreck.

We submerged on that bright morning, and began the search over the floor of the sea for the good old *Esperanza*, that had served us so well. To me the search was tinged with considerable sadness; as if I were seeking the corpse of a friend; for I had conceived a great affection for the first steamship I ever owned, that had served me as faithfully as a friend and with obedient fidelity. Time and again, traversing that submarine space, both Jimmy and I thought we had come upon her; but each time our hope proved faulty and ill-founded. It was on the second day of our quest that we were driven to the conclusion that we were at fault concerning the depth at which she lay, for it seemed that we had inspected every foot of the shoals for miles around. We found one feature that

was disturbing, which was that the shoal, well defined, dipped abruptly away from shallow fathoms to considerable depths. The sea floor was exactly as if one traversed a section of moorland, ending in a brow of cliffs against whose feet sand had deposited itself. For indefinite miles it stretched away in a highland on one side, and a valley on the other, into whose depths we had not explored. We were slowly traversing this when we came upon a singular mark. It was like a scar in a hillside. We stopped the *Hector*, shut off the light with its roaring sound, and held a consultation there in the narrow confines of our little observatory.

"That scar," declared Jimmy, "if not a natural slip of the shoal, indicates that the *Esperanza* came to the sea floor on the edge of this plateau, and then, slowly, of her own weight, slid downward to some place where she had to stop. I think it's worth our while following it downward as deep as we can. How does it strike you, Tom?"

"But," I objected, "would such a scar remain so long a time, unless it were merely a natural phenomenon?"

"Of course it would," he assented. "Why, do you know that down in these Caribbean waters, particularly on the run from Manzanillo westward to Batabano, where it is rather shallow, ships have made a road that is as clearly defined in the silt beneath as any road ever laid upon land? I myself have seen it, and have stood in the bows of a ship where I could look down through the water and trace the course of those boats as clearly as I could see highways in front of me. And, what is more, those tracks were made by the turning of the screws, that disturbed the soft silt at the bottom, and not by the actual contact, as would be the case if the scar we see outside there were made by the gradual slipping of the *Esperanza* as she slid down that declivity. In any event, we can easily follow it downward for fifty fathoms. That we are sure of, because we have been that deep in this same boat, and got safely back to the surface afterwards."

As far as I am concerned, I am positive this is about our last chance to find her."

"Distressing, but true," I assented; for indeed we were at that point.

We resolved to take the risks to assure ourselves that we were either on a hopeful lead or facing defeat. We took every precaution for safety, notified the men aboard of what we were about to try, and began letting the water into our tanks. Very slowly and steadily we descended. I stood at the indicators and gauges, and gave the orders, while Jimmy remained alone in his compartment, manipulating his light and signaling, when need arose for change in the downward course. We slid steadily into the depths, with men stationed at every vulnerable point to give an alarm in case we reached a depth too great for the resistance of the *Hector*'s steel hull. My own anxiety and suspense were almost unbearable when the gauges in front of me indicated a depth of fifty fathoms, and we were still descending, directing our course by that ever-present trail which Jimmy alone was observing. I was hypnotized by the moving finger of the dial in front of me, and saw it pass on from fifty to fifty-two, fifty-four, fifty-six, and fifty-eight fathoms, and then wild conjectures absorbed me as to whether we should ever be able to overcome the enormous pressure now being heaped and piled upon every inch of the steel hull around us, and reach the surface. It was quite true that the pumps and valves had been tested to fifty-seven fathoms pressure in the Laurenti docks, but suppose that these tests had been inaccurate, or that they had on that occasion been strained to a point where they might never so effectively operate again? We had beneath us a keel that could be released, granting us some tons more buoyancy, but there had been sadly proven cases where faulty clutches had failed to work, and the keel had not detached itself.

The black finger in front of me traveled at decreasing speed, but now wavered above the figures sixty, and was

slowly moving upward to sixty-one. It had become a duel between Twisted Jimmy Martin in his compartment, and me, commanding the vessel's submergence, as to which would be first to surrender. What on earth was the value of gold compared with one's life? Suppose we fought that duel to the end, was it our right to imperil the lives of twelve men whom we had aboard, and who were blindly trusting us to lead them no farther than the bounds of safety dictated?

I confess that my nerve had reached its limit, and I was ready to throw up my hands and cry "Enough." I was actually reaching hurriedly to the telephone to order halt and the turning-on of the powerful pumps that would either prove ineffective at so great a depth or bring us to the surface, when I got a request from Jimmy to back slowly on a level keel, then followed a call to sink still deeper.

I was about to call a halt when Jimmy signaled for it, much to my relief. The indicators came to a stand, and we were motionless at sixty-two fathoms, a most unprecedented depth, never before attained by any living man. We were actually surrounded by a pressure of nearly one hundred and sixty-two pounds per square inch upon our hull—a pressure beneath which a human being would have been crushed to a pulp! More than ten times the normal pressure of the atmosphere upon the human body at sea level! And yet no man on watch had cried a warning to tell us that the steel plates about us, buckling and bending though they were under this enormous strain, had betrayed a leak or the possibility of disaster. In that profound silence which pervades a submarine when submerged at great depths and when all machinery has stopped, I heard the sound of heavy, clumping boots over steel gratings, and Jimmy Martin's voice roaring excitedly:

"Tom! Tom! We have got her. We are at the bottom, and if you will come forward, you can have a look at our ship. It's the *Esperanza* sure enough!"

CHAPTER XXIII

I HASTENED after him to the little compartment, equipping myself as I ran with the deafeners for my ears and the ponderous eye-pieces, and then, for a long time, stood looking at the sight before me. True enough, there lay the *Esperanza*, resting at the bottom of the declivity, and at the foot of the scar which she had made in her downward progress. She was tilted at such an angle that her whole side was plainly visible. The great hole amidships, torn by the torpedo that had sunk her, was exposed, and her plates were jagged and bent inward around its edges. Even as I looked, a number of deep-sea fish, looking monstrous and goggle-eyed, swam hastily out of her engine-room, and off into the depths, as if blinded by the glare of light fixed upon them. Aside from the wound that had brought her to death, the *Esperanza* seemed almost uninjured. There was but a slight coating of sea-deposit visible on her hull, and where she rested there was no sea-growth to wave and twist about her like a sub-ocean funeral shroud. At that moment was born the wild, almost frantic hope of salvaging not only the gold, but the ship herself, and something of the same thought must have been in Jimmy's mind, for he swung the searchlight slowly across her from stem to stern, giving an ample opportunity for inspection. It seemed certain that her keel was intact and uninjured. If that proved true, it might be possible to bring her to the surface, were it not for the great depth, and whether or not that would prove an insurmountable obstacle remained to be seen. One thing, however, was obvious, that only by bringing her to the surface could we reach the gold. The absurdity of all this speculation was realized when I remembered our position, for it was still a matter of anxiety and uncertainty whether we should be able to raise ourselves to the surface and save our own lives, which, for the time



TRUE ENOUGH, THERE LAY THE ESPERANZA

being, was assuredly of more importance than the salvaging of the *Esperanza*, or the treasure aboard her. Twisted Jimmy Martin, too, seemed to recall this, for he cut off his lights, dropped from his little platform, and we removed the deafeners and glasses, and met each other's eyes.

"Now for it," he said grimly.

"Yes," I answered. "We shall know within the next few minutes just about how desperate an effort is before us to climb back up. Do you realize that we are standing at sixty-two fathoms' depth, probably the greatest depth ever before attained by any living human being?"

For answer he turned and pointed to the gauges in front of him.

"Realize it? Good Lord, man! I have been shivering in a cold sweat up there on that platform every second of time since the gauge dropped below fifty-five. But she has not sprung a leak anywhere, has she?"

"Nothing reported," I answered, as together we turned and passed through the engine-room, where the men, unaware of our actual achievement, but evidently in suspense, stood waiting for orders.

I gave them commands, heard the first heavy throbbing of the pumps, and the roaring of the dynamos, and for an instant feared the worst. Then, with almost stately ease, the *Hector*'s dials began to show ascent, the hydroplanes cut the water, and at a long angle we swept serenely upward out of the depths. The feat was accomplished with such ease that I could have shouted with exultation; for now I knew that the craft was not only the most powerful, but the most adept, of its kind in the entire world. We were, for the time being, absolute masters of everything on all the floors of all the seas at such depths. We were the salvage kings of the world. Fortunes beyond computation were actually within our reach. As we almost leapt above the surface of the water and opened the conning-tower and ventilator conduits, I again thought

with overwhelming gratitude of Monsieur Périgord, that kindly old man who had put such possibilities within our reach, and could I at that moment have flashed him a message across the Atlantic, telling him of our success, I would have given five hundred dollars for such ability. I could picture to myself his gratification when a message reached him, for I felt how keenly interested he was in our endeavor, an endeavor which he had fathered and made possible for us.

We made most exact observations as to the location of the wreck, not caring to leave a tell-tale buoy to arouse comment and speculation, if by chance any ship came across it, and then, running light, turned toward Martinique, that lay, blue, beautiful, and bathed in sunlight, on the eastern horizon.

It was too late in the afternoon to begin operations on that day, and I took advantage of the remaining hours of daylight to make my way to that little village in which dwelt the friendly old cable officer, who had been of such splendid assistance to me, and who had actually accomplished the ambition of Monsieur Périgord. I was much disappointed when a strange face confronted me through the wicket. Monsieur le capitaine Fournier had been gone for some weeks. He, too, had been homesick for France, like that other exile, and his longings had been gratified. I secured his address from his successor before I wrote the following cablegram:

Monsieur Hector de la Périgord, Montrichard, Loir et Cher, France. Boat has met all expectations. Success seems within reach, thanks to your generosity. Captain Fournier, who is real author of your honourable return, can be found at St. Cyr, Tours. Congratulations and regards.

The cable officer started perfunctorily to check the message, and then his eyes opened wide, and he smiled up at me.

"Pardon me, monsieur," he said, "but is that the Périgord who lived so long in Maracaibo?"

Wondering somewhat at his curiosity, I replied in the affirmative.

"A most remarkable career, monsieur," he went on. "I have but to-day received newspapers telling of his arrival in France. Doubtless you would be interested in reading them. I have finished them from top to bottom, including the advertisements, and if you wish, you may have them."

I did wish them, and did accept them, and, impatient to read the news they contained, repaired to the little hotel where Jimmy and I had stopped, and where I was to meet him before our return to the *Hector*. We sat in our old private corner of the garden, and I read to him aloud, translating as I progressed, what had happened to our benefactor.

Monsieur Périgord, as became such a remarkable figure, and one who had made such a liberal sacrifice for France, had been given a welcome in the whole-hearted and generous French style upon his arrival. He had been publicly decorated by the President in person. It appeared that not only through me had he tried to ship gold to France, but that he had also contributed enormous sums during the entire course of the war in an anonymous way through his bankers, and that the President of France, having learned that he was the donor, had gleefully betrayed him and told of his generosity. I had not even dreamed of the extent of his affluence, for the paper stated that altogether he had given the enormous sum of one hundred million francs to the cause of France, not including the treasure which I had attempted to convey, and which was the first and only gift given openly in his own name. The paper stated that he had retired, considerably exhausted by the extravagance of the public reception, and public honors, to one of his châteaux that had been restored to him, where he was now in seclusion and peace. Another paper stated, with not too much delicacy, that Monsieur Périgord, like so many others in France, had

completely impoverished himself by his patriotic gifts, and was now far from being even a moderately rich man.

When I read this last and concluding paragraph, both Jimmy and I found ourselves looking at each other with staring eyes.

"Well, what do you think of that, Tom? That poor old cuss gave us about the last dollar he had," declared Jimmy, in an awe-stricken mumble. "He knew he was broke at the time he made arrangements for the money, and was giving us the last of his wad on a blind chance that we would make good, and also because he was so big-hearted he was bound to show us he appreciated what you had done for him — just like a man who is dying passes over his pocket-knife and his watch to the friend who has stuck by him."

"Jimmy, it's up to you and me to make good," I said. "He is going to need us now more than he ever did in his life before, and somehow I have an idea that he did not at all depend upon us, and thought we were a pair of dreamers; so if we can help him out after he has broken himself for his country, and for us, we will play the score even or know the reason why."

"Aye! That we will!" exclaimed Twisted Jimmy, as if ratifying an agreement.

And it was with this determination imbuing both of us that on the following day the Hector led the way out of the cove, followed by the squat, ugly, dingy Sea-Gull, pulling an anything-but-beautiful barge and the pontoons that made our salvage equipment complete. I still recall most vividly that morning scene. It is some years since then, but I can still feel upon my face the soft landward breeze, the sight of high mountains, upreared and frowning behind us, the receding tropical growths and greens of the shore, the blue of the sea and the restless uplift of its surface, as we ploughed through it toward our destination. I remember that, standing on the tiny bridge of the submarine and keeping constant note of our speed

and the tale of the compass, my exhilaration was subdued by a grave thought that after all we had but commenced our task, and that failure would be more bitter than ever if luck went against us. I almost regretted having sent such an exuberant message to Monsieur Périgord, in the quietude of his beloved France, for I knew that if that paragraph in the newspaper was true, and I was convinced it was, his hopes, like our own, were centred solely upon our success.

We were, after all, but explorers in an unknown field, for never yet in all the history of the seas had man been able to resurrect from its greater depths any of his treasures lost, save under the most propitious circumstances. Its floors, below fifty fathoms' depth, were laden with the accumulation of the centuries. Aye, this is true. A Spaniard had conquered the Incas of Peru, and wrested from them more than eight hundred million dollars' worth of gold, to have it in turn wrested from him by these same Caribbean waves and laid away in the inviolate treasure chests of the seas, together with the bones of those who, having tortured others, came, tortured themselves, to unapproachable graves. And grim was the guard these dead men kept over their ill-gotten treasure in the black sea-caverns beneath us. Dead men and gold removed from the reach of the living as if to teach the feebly strutting, striving conquistador of earth the futility of battling with an enemy whose face could not be so much as scarred by the prows of his ships.

We came to a halt near where we judged the *Esperanza* lay, but not quite above it, taking advantage of our knowledge to bring the barge to anchorage on the high edge of the shoal, and, determined to waste no time, brought the assembled force to work. There was much to do in those preliminaries. None but one who has worked in a wreck-age outfit has much conception of the careful preparations that are requisite to even a less formidable task than ours. The handling of huge steel cylinders that must be sub-

merged, the adjustment of the enormous pumps which must eventually drive the water from these and force air into them when once they are fixed to the wreck, the swinging of huge cranes, the handling of powerful donkey engines, and the thousand and one little details, upon any single one of which either success or failure depends, are exigencies which a layman does not appreciate. It would seem to the unthinking man that nothing could be more simple in shallow water than to lower a diver over the edge of a boat and when he grappled the wreck, hoist him aboard and haul away. A landsman does not stop to consider that the rise of a ground swell, or even the slightest sea, makes the seizure of the wreck almost an impossibility, for in the water at even a depth where all is still and serene the great hooks move up and down under the lift and fall of wave buoyancy most tantalizingly. Once the irons are fastened to a wreck in shallow waters, there is the constant danger that wave pressure alone will hoist her up, then bring her thumping down upon the bottom to her disintegration. It is for this reason that so few submarines are ever salvaged, save in the calmest of seas. Nature herself is, and will always remain, the most formidable opponent to the wrecker.

When our surface preparations had been made, the *Hector* again lowered herself, this time with complete confidence, to begin her share of the work. The first time when we attained that enormous depth, Twisted Jimmy and I had gone down in quivering fear, held in leash only by desperation. Familiarity does breed contempt, for on the second submergence to the sea floor, we descended with nothing more than a tensity brought about by a slight uncertainty, and on the third time we descended boldly. The *Hector* had proved competent. There was no danger that we could see, and we became accustomed to abnormal conditions.

We became mere workmen, Jimmy and I, down there

at the bottom, drilling holes here and there through which to thrust interior locking eye-bolts, to which we expected to fasten our huge steel cylinders until buoyancy aided surface strength to lift the *Esperanza* from her seabed. We learned to manipulate the *Hector* in those great depths until we could poise her in position at will. We lived in a strange atmosphere of our own. Engrossed in our work, and forgetting that we were the first men to attempt such a task, we had forgotten the vicissitudes of the elements themselves on that third day, when, after successfully attaching one of the huge steel cylinders to the *Esperanza*, we came to the surface to rest for the night, and were told by the chief officer aboard the tug that his barometer was beginning to show signs of unrest, and ours speedily confirmed it. We were actually astonished when we looked up that evening, expecting sunlight, to find a sky overcast, and flying streamers of warning clouds, wind-driven in the upper spaces, scurrying northward as if to escape a tempest.

By the time we had finished our anxious evening meal, it became certain that safety demanded that we should run for it. As yet the surface of the sea was undisturbed, but had taken on an almost sinister oiliness, as if breathing deeply to gain strength for an onslaught. Despite the terrifying indications about us, had we been in more northern waters we should have hung on a while longer; but in the tropics even the barometer becomes unstable, and there are scarcely ever two storms that give similar indications when impending. I began to fear that we were in the very center of a hurricane that was forming around us, and that would, when under way, become cyclonic. We therefore lost no time in getting the barge anchors up, and the men aboard her began making hurried preparations for safety. We were still confident that with anything at all like good fortune, the tug would have time to tow her convoy into one of the harbors of Martinique. We discussed the advisability, however, of

taking a spare line aboard the *Hector*, but concluded that we might retard rather than hasten the tow, which was, after all, a comparatively light burden for the *Sea-Gull*. For an hour we ran abreast of her as she progressed toward safety, throwing a huge column of smoke into the stillness of the air above her, and proving to us that Rogers was sparing no effort for speed. The *Hector*, in the meantime, was taking chances and running light, but with everything in readiness for a quick closing of ventilators and conning-tower hatch in case of emergency. This preparation was not wasted; for the storm fell upon us with scarcely a moment's warning. We had no time to waste when it burst. In the few minutes granted us to look through the periscope, we saw that the tug had altered her course and was heading toward the storm, apparently intent on working by a long angle for the port we had made after the sinking of the *Esperanza*. We knew now that whatever our desire to assist her, we could be of no service, and already were warned of our own danger by the terrific rolling and straining of the *Hector*.

A submarine on the surface in a storm suffers even more, owing to her build, than the average liner; for the pitch and toss is given a sickening quality of instability that a true surface boat does not possess. The plunging is not unlike the heavy dive and slow recovery of a battleship in distress. Again, a submarine is but an enormous mass of machinery, a large proportion of which is of a rather delicate nature, and therefore her only resource in a storm is to submerge.

For a few minutes, while we struggled to keep sight of the tug-boat and her wallowing tow behind, we aboard the *Hector* were hurled to and fro, and "batted" sideways, clinging with might and main to anything to keep from falling, and then, as we hastily submerged to escape possible destruction, we came suddenly into that astonishing change that can be felt aboard a submarine only under such circumstances. At twenty feet depth the rolling and

pitching was appreciably less, and at forty-five feet, to which level we came before stopping, it was as if we had passed into a world of motionless stillness. In almost any ordinary storm a submergence of thirty feet brings a submersible boat into comparative calm, incredible as this may seem to one who witnesses the enormous lift and fall of waters upon the surface. We stopped all engines, and for an hour and a half rested there, vastly concerned regarding the weather the Sea-Gull might be making toward her destination, and then decided to learn, if possible, whether the hurricane had been of but short duration or threatened to be prolonged. We accordingly emptied some of the water from our ballast tanks and started upward; but even at a depth of thirty feet we were aware by the motion of the boat that above us the seas were still engulfed in a fury, and were compelled once more to submerge. We were now certain that in no event could we be of any assistance to the tug, and that our own safety depended upon maintaining such depth as would prevent us from injury. Also we knew that by this time the night above would be as black as a storm can ever accomplish. We exercised such patience as we could, set the customary watches, and went to sleep.

At seven o'clock of the following morning we again tried to emerge and again became aware that the tempest was unabated. Throughout that trying day, at intervals, we made further attempts; but always to find them useless, and so were forced to pass a second night submerged.

It was nearly noon of the following day when, despite the rolling of the sea, we came to the surface. The storm had passed with all that surprising swiftness of change with which so many tropical hurricanes are accompanied, and the sun was shining hot and white above us. The sea had abated, save for the long after-swallows, and gave promise to subside entirely within a few hours. The glass itself indicated clearing weather, and we were able to renew our air supply, although not without an occasional wetting

through the open hatches together with some discomfort, from the motion. Nowhere upon the surface of the sea was there anything in sight; so, hoping fervently that the tug with her tow had preceded us safely to the harbor toward which she had been heading when last seen, we ourselves struggled in that direction.

With our air replenished, we ran submerged under the power of our motors and by dead reckoning, until the time we were forced to travel on the surface, and then arose to find ourselves but a mile or so distant from the harbor entrance. Fortunately for us, the storm had come up from the south-southeast. Hence the moment we were clear of the headlands of the little bay, we were in undisturbed water and could emerge completely. For the first time in days we were able to come out on deck and look around.

The whole of the tiny harbor lay open before us, and was absolutely untenanted.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE deck of the *Hector*, the only craft afloat in the little bay, was, immediately she stopped, crowded with all the men aboard her, including the engineer, and all were exchanging apprehensive glances.

"It looks mighty bad, Tom," said Jimmy, with a shake of his head, and I was compelled to agree with him. "She surely did n't make in in here, and that means —"

He had no need to complete his sentence, for the failure of the tug to make this harbor was ominous. It was quite certain she could have found no port of refuge farther south, unless, by a miracle, she succeeded in surviving until she reached the northwest coast of Santa Lucia. This, although not more than forty miles away, would necessitate her facing the full blast of the tempest that would sweep in across the open channel between Marti-

nique and the former island. It seemed an impossibility. If the Sea-Gull and her convoy had succeeded in keeping afloat, they would have had to fight their way against a strong westward drift, but if able to make headway, might have found shelter at Castries. If they had not made this port of safety, it was probable that the tug, barge, and all aboard had foundered and were gone.

We went ashore at Le Marin to make inquiries, and there learned that on the night previous a report had been received from Castries that a boat in distress had been sighted below Gros Island, but we were unable to get any further information owing to a break in communication, and therefore returned to the *Hector*, resolved to cruise southward to Castries to learn if the unfortunate craft was ours. It was late when we arrived there and cautiously made our way into the harbor. We ran slowly past a bulky old tramp steamer, that looked as if she had barely survived the hurricane after suffering much damage in the conflict, and were proceeding toward the quay when we were hailed. We stopped our progress to answer.

"Is that the submarine *Hector*?" demanded a voice from the gloom of the wing of the bridge above us, and when I answered in the affirmative the voice resumed:

"This is the British ship *Hartlepool*, Captain Bartlett speaking. Your tug, the *Sea-Gull*, is lying over against number four pier. We got her in yesterday. She had a narrow shave, sir, I can tell you."

"How about her tow?" I called to him.

"Lost, with one man aboard. Pretty tough luck, but so it goes."

"How soon are you leaving port, Captain?" I asked.

"Can't tell yet," he replied; "got a lot of overhauling to do. We had a pretty close call ourselves. You will have plenty of time to see me, because I shall be here for probably a week."

Assuring him that I should call upon him on the first opportunity, we resumed our way until we came abreast

with what was left of the Sea-Gull. She was moored fore and aft to a stone quay, and seemed nothing more than a hull. She was practically stripped of upper works and inert. Her funnel, as well as her single mast, were gone, and she was crusted with salt until she resembled nothing so much as the gray ghost of a boat lying there at rest. As we came alongside Rogers hailed us, and directed us where to proceed a little farther on. A wharf watchman ran down to guide us to a berth and we tied up and climbed ashore to meet the men from the Sea-Gull, who had jumped to the wharf and rushed to greet us.

“Who was lost aboard the barge?” was the first question I asked.

“Poor old Mike Cochrane, sir. He stuck on alone, although he knew that he did n’t have a chance in a thousand. We succeeded, with drag-lines, in getting the other boys off and aboard the tug. When it looked absolutely hopeless, with the big number two hawser gone, and the number one chafed until there were n’t a half-dozen strands left, I tried to get Mike to come aboard; but he would n’t do it. The last thing he said was to tell you and Jimmy that he had made good, whatever he meant by that; and then came another jerk on the line, it parted, and the last we saw of the barge and the pontoons was when they slipped off into the darkness. We got nearly up to the lee-shore of Gros Island, when a particularly nasty one came aboard, took away most of the deck-house, as you see, and the funnel, and then her rudder chains went, and it looked as though it was all off with us. Old man Hart had a leg broken at the thigh, was washed off the deck, and then washed back again by another wave, and we got him aboard all right. He is up at the hospital now. Mellin had a right arm broken, and he is up there with him. Cary got a bump on the head that put him out of business for five hours, but the doctor says he does n’t think his skull is fractured. Whipple had his thumb torn off, and there is scarcely one of the boys that did n’t get

more or less knocked about. Otherwise everything is all right."

I wondered what "otherwise" there could be, and the whole crowd of us, save the watchman, went across to a water-front inn, where we could sit down and get the details.

The storm had burst upon the *Sea-Gull* with a violence that, while alarming, was not by any means overwhelming, and for a time, although laboring heavily, the tug succeeded in making way against it. Then, when safety was almost in sight, the second stage of the tempest broke, and this time the tug was powerless against it, and was slowly carried backward from land to sea, although fighting desperately for every inch. There came another slight lull, which was the one the chief mate had taken advantage of to bring the men off the barge to the tug-boat. He was convinced that, could he have induced Cochrane to come, it would have been better to cast the towline from the bits with a heavy sea-anchor, and take a chance to recover the barge later; but Cochrane, it appeared, had desperately opposed this, and told the last of the men who went off that he proposed to stick it if it cost him his life. Even when warned at the very last that the towline was parting he had obstinately refused to surrender, declaring that the barge was still sound. Long before this all the steel cylinders save two had been swept overboard, and these two were amidships of the barge. The men had done the best they could to clear away such portions of the steel cranes as were removable, but when last seen by the aid of a flash of lightning one of those had parted company with the barge.

There was a solemn concurrence of opinion among the whole crowd of those who had been aboard the surface boats that it was useless looking for either the barge or Mike Cochrane, and that they were foredoomed to destruction.

They fell to talking among themselves, and I sat there

in that stuffy old lounge-room, thinking of all that Mike Cochrane had been in the time I had known him, and of how, at the last, he had retrieved himself completely by a most gallant, although foolish, loyalty. He had made one big mistake, and that was all, and it had been forgiven him and wiped off the slate on that evening in Maracaibo when we shook hands across the little table and called the old score off. It hurt me more than I can express to think that at the end, so intent had he been upon proving his fidelity, he had boldly passed out into the night and storm, hoping, possibly, to save for us what was left of our outfit. It did not seem fair to abandon him after so gallant an attempt as he had made without exerting every effort to discover whether he was still alive. The loss of the barge and our outfit did not enter into the calculation at all; for these were things that could be replaced, but not so a man who had indeed given such valiant proof of his sincerity. I was sorry that I had so long mistrusted him, and looking across at Jimmy, who sat with his jowls down over his collar, and staring absently at the top of a decanter, I fancied that similar thoughts were running through his mind. I obeyed an impulse, jumped to my feet, crossed the room, and addressed a man in uniform who stood leaning against the bar.

"Excuse me, sir," I said; "you are a harbor official, are you not?"

"I am the harbor-master," he answered. "You are Captain Hale, the owner of the *Sea-Gull*, are n't you?"

"I am Captain Hale," I replied, "and I should like to know what steamships are in port?"

"More of them at this moment than there have been at any time since the war began," he said bluntly. "There are seven of them here now, including your own."

"And how many of them capable of going to sea?" I asked.

"Four of them are uninjured, and none of them are liners. All of them tramps, and good ones, too."

"I suppose I could get aboard them to see their skippers to-night, could I not?" I asked.

"You could," he answered dryly, "but you would not find them there. They are having a dinner at a hotel and probably won't go off to their ships until midnight."

"Can you take me to where they are?" I asked.

"I suppose I could; but why? What do you want of them?"

"As you know, I have lost a barge and an outfit. There was a man aboard that barge who is worth a whole lot more than money to me, and that I am going to try to save if he is still alive."

For a moment he looked at me incredulously, and then said, "I suppose you know it would probably cost you some thousands of dollars to make the search you would have to go through with, don't you?" He stared at me, as he asked this, with that same questioning look.

"Know it? Of course I do, and would spend a good deal more than it costs if I can find that man alive."

"Relative of yours?"

"Not at all. Merely one of the members of the crew."

He suddenly thrust a huge fist toward me, got my hand in a grip that hurt, and exclaimed:

"By God, sir, you are a man! There are not many owners who would take that trouble and expense on a hundred-to-one chance. I would bet that you will never find the fellow you have lost, or the barge either; but I honor you for being willing to take a try. Come with me and I will take you to where these skippers are, and if I don't lose my guess, there is not a one of them that won't put in three or four days helping you if you will pay nothing more than the expenses of the effort. They are a white lot, the whole outfit of them. Three of them are British, and one of them a Yankee."

I did not tell the others of my crew where I was going, but called Twisted Jimmy to me, and together we went up the dark street to the hotel where the tramp-masters

were found in a tiny room, sitting round a table, in an atmosphere so laden with smoke that for a moment we could scarcely distinguish their faces. The harbor-master took it upon himself to explain the object of my visit, and for me it was most embarrassing, because he said a great many things concerning me that were not entirely justified. He had a gift of crude eloquence, which he interlarded with oaths that proved most effective. Twice I tried to silence him, for I considered myself the leader of the proposition and wanted an opportunity to express my own views and get down to a business working; but he silenced me with an abrupt remark: "Captain Hale, you are not on your own vessel here. I am the harbor-master of this port, and I am doing the talking."

I admit now, at this late date, that he did a better job of it than I should have done, for he enthused those three stolid British ship-masters and that one calculating Yankee, until they thumped their fists upon the table and declared their readiness to steam out that night and trust to my word that sufficient should be paid to satisfy their owners after the short cruise was done. The harbor-master himself proved invaluable in conference; for being somewhat of an expert of the sea, coming to port through age alone, he told us fully and exactly the course taken by the storm, as gathered from reports that had come into his office during the preceding two days. He bellowed for a chart, got it, swept aside the litter of dishes, bottles, and glasses on the table, and with a stumpy lead pencil marked out the storm's pathway. He computed the drift of the barge from the known force of the wind, and finally put a cross on a white spot and asserted, triumphantly, as if convinced by his own reckoning: "If that barge is still afloat there is where she will be found at this hour! Anybody here who disagrees with me?"

The other six of us were leaning forward with our heads close together over the chart, each checking the harbor-master's computations, and we now arose in complete

agreement. It was very characteristic of the British skippers that, without any speech at all, they nodded and began reaching for their caps and coats. The Cape Cod ship-master delved into the depths of a hip-pocket and drawled: "My ship will be clear of this harbor in just one hour. Her fires are banked; but she's got a bully good forced draft, and can do a neat fourteen knots."

We stopped long enough to organize our search, and decided that we should keep in touch, steaming north-northwest, until daybreak, when we were to spread out, thus enabling ourselves to cover an area of nearly fifty miles in width, and the captains agreed that I should take passage on one of the central ships and be in command of the operations. There was no fuss about our preparations or our departure. It was exactly as if we were bent on a common enterprise of far less moment than the saving of a man's life from a derelict barge or discovering proof that further search was useless. There was not even an appearance of sentimental interest or humanitarian motive in the phlegmatic way in which the bill was paid and we tramped noisily downstairs and out into the night with the harbor-master still in the lead; but there must have been considerable surprise aboard the four sea-tramps when their crews were ordered out and all of their boilers put under forced draft for a midnight sailing. I left instructions for the submarine and the Sea-Gull to remain in port until my return, and Jimmy and I went aboard the Nelson, of Liverpool, a thirty-six-hundred-ton ship, with a remarkable turn of speed, heard her anchors pulled home, felt the first throbs of her engines, the first turn of her screws, and watched her as she swung her head slowly out toward the open Caribbean. An hour later, driving closely together, we could observe the lights of the three other tramps, all steaming steadily on a given course, and I went to sleep with the satisfaction of knowing that four competent wanderers of the sea were heading off into the darkness with but one intent, that of saving the life of one

man for whose welfare I felt greatly responsible, a man who had once been my enemy and betrayed me, but if still alive, had proven himself my friend.

It was all that I could do, and I was not ashamed. Although not hopeful, I had at least the serenity which comes from a conscience that is clear.

CHAPTER XXV

WHEN morning came we were in the field of our search, provided the calculations of the harbor-master had been well-founded, and now spread out as widely as possible, steaming abreast at ten knots speed. Hour after hour passed without success, until at noon we drew within reach of one another and held a conference. The captain of the Nelson was of the opinion that we were too far to the westward; but the Yankee skipper worked out so plausible a theory of the disturbance of land-currents, even in the midst of a hurricane, that we decided to adopt his plan, making a broad sweep to the south, and running a gridiron course to the east again. At three o'clock in the afternoon we were convinced that these hopes also had been exhausted, and therefore took the advice of the Nelson's master and headed toward the north-northeast. By this time the sea had resumed its normal smoothness with that strange, abrupt change of face which characterizes the Caribbean, which seems forever in an immoderate mood, being either surpassingly smooth or surpassingly violent.

We were being driven to a conviction that our search was useless and that in all probability nothing of Mike Cochrane or the barge would ever be seen again, when the ship sailing on the eastern wing suddenly sent up a signal by a daylight rocket. Our little squadron swung toward her. Having the tallest mast, fitted with a whaler's crow's-nest, she had the largest horizon of any of us, and had

marked an object almost directly ahead toward which we steamed. The first view that we aboard the Nelson had was of nothing more than a short staff with an object lashed to it. It proved to be Cochrane's jumper, flying as a flag of distress from the deck of the barge, which, stripped clean by the tempest, was floating suddenly in the water, as if on the point of foundering. Her cranes were entirely gone, and of all the steel cylinders, on which we had depended to give buoyancy to the Esperanza, but two were left, the ones that had been chained amidships to eye-bolts through the main-deck beams. As we came down toward the derelict the nearest steamer turned loose her siren, and we strained our eyes toward the wreck for a sign of life, but nothing appeared. My hopes of saving Cochrane's life were at low ebb, and yet I could not understand the distress signal had he not been alive at least after the storm. The Nelson, having a better turn of speed than any of the others, was the first to reach the waterlogged barge, and lowered away a boat. I took my seat in it by the request of the British skipper, who with blunt courtesy declared that it was I who was the rescuer, and therefore entitled to be the first man to step aboard.

The men gave way on the oars, as if eager to discover any secret that might be aboard the battered victim of the storm, and the barge was resting so low in the water that I had but little trouble in leaping upward, catching a ring bolt, and thus gaining her deck. Gaping holes here and there, some of the twisted steel of the wrecked cranes, broken stanchions of the deck-house that had been twisted off as if made of matchwood, and every foot of her deck testified to the fury through which she had passed. Cochrane's distress signal had been hoisted upon a strip of deck planking, and thrust through and lashed to the chains holding the two remaining cylinders; but I could see nothing of him on that side. I made my way around the ends of the cylinders, and discovered what appeared to be an inert bundle of rags, lying beneath one of the big,

round overhangs, as if, at the last, he had crawled there for shelter. I fell on my knees, got him by the feet, and dragged him out. Apparently he was dead. His eyes were closed, and his face, through tan and stubble, was of an ugly pallor. I put my hand into the opening of his shirt, and anxiously sought the beating of his heart. It struggled faintly, as if I had come but to feel its last strokes. Fortunately I had put a pocket-flask of brandy in my coat for such an emergency, and now got his head on my knees, and poured a few drops of it on his swollen tongue. One of the men from the boat clambered aboard, bringing with him a canteen of water, and we trickled some of this down Cochrane's throat. He opened his eyes, but with no sign of recognition. Again we resorted to the stimulant, and were delighted when he automatically swallowed. We gave him more water after a short interval, and this time he avidly seized the canteen when we tried to withdraw it from his lips, and we knew that he was perishing from thirst as well as starvation. We got him to a sitting position before he recovered his senses, feebly croaked my name, muttered something unintelligible, then mumbled, "I stuck to her, I did."

I patted him on the back, told him to keep quiet, and we picked him up and lowered him into the boat. A cheer broke out from the four watching ships about us, to which my rowers responded enthusiastically, as we conveyed Cochrane to the Nelson, where the first mate insisted on relinquishing his own stateroom.

There was quite a gathering on the deck of the barge after Cochrane had been safely bestowed, and I was greeted by the Yankee skipper with "Well, Captain Hale, your barge is n't so bad. She's not making any water just now, and I have an idea that we can send over men from all the boats with hand-pumps and get the best of it. Enough so that we can tow this bit of salvage back for you, if you want it."

"Want it? Of course he does," growled the master

of the Nelson. "I've got a new hawse-line and the bits of the barge are still sound. Why not each of us put a pumping gang aboard and in the meantime I will come up forward, get our line across, and make for port. The pump crews can tow their boats behind, so that if the barge founders under the strain, they will be safe enough."

I had not expected so much kindness and generosity. I made a feeble protest which they promptly overruled, and proceeded to carry out their own plans. So, when darkness fell, the Nelson was keeping a tight hawse-line on an unwieldy, sluggish barge behind, from which came the steady clanging of hand-pumps, emptying water into the sea. Once in the night we stopped and sent over a relief for the workers, and had the gratifying news that the barge was clearing herself, thus proving that much of the water taken aboard had been through the broken decks, and the indications were that not many of the seams of her hull were badly sprung.

The master of the Nelson, who had a considerable knowledge of seafaring medicine, had sternly debarred every one, including myself, from disturbing Cochrane, and it was not until the following morning that I was permitted to talk to him. When I entered the stateroom where he was lying, it was immediately apparent that the skipper of the Nelson had given me a most fulsome send-off, because Cochrane, from sheer weakness and gratitude, could not speak when I entered, but shoved a hand toward me, and when I held it, shut his eyes, and I saw that tears were trickling down his face. I talked to him as I might have done to a mere boy, for, after all, he was n't much more.

"There, there, don't worry, you are all right now," I said soothingly, and it broke the ice.

"It's all right," he declared, with an Irish embellishment. "But, by the Holy Virgin, I would have died if I had had any other man than Captain Hale for a master. Four ships of them there were, big ships — all out cruising

the seas, looking for one poor devil of an oiler who had gone adrift and was passing out. Four of them, looking for one man."

"Why not?" I demanded, with assumed gruffness that I did n't feel in such an awkward moment. "The boys brought me your message. You told them to tell me that you were going to stick. Well, you stuck by me, so why should not I stick by you? Why, Mike Cochrane, if we had n't been able to save you, I should have felt all my life that I had helped to murder you. You did the best you could, and it was a pretty good best, too."

"I tried to save her for you, sir," he said, "but I could n't. When she went adrift I still hoped that she could ride it out, but the sea-anchor I tried to rig on her was washed away, and then the seas began to pound her, until she could not be held up any more, and piece after piece went. When the last crane fell, taking up part of the deck with it, and leaving a hole, I thought it was all off, and was almost washed overboard while trying to spike a piece of canvas over it; then the canvas went. When the little deck-house was carried away, I was left without food or water. 'T was the loss of the water that was worst, sir, and I got that dry that I stood and dreamed of it where I had lashed myself to one of the big chains alongside one of the 'midships cylinders. Then the storm went down, and I was almost like a man in a haze when I rigged up that signal, and I did n't seem to remember much more, and I was cold and wet. Then I got hot and dry and the sun was fierce. I lost track of everything, and gave up; but I was quite happy, sir, when I crawled under the bilge of the big cylinders to die, in thinking that, anyhow, I had got even with you and Mr. Martin, at last, and that now I was gone maybe sometimes you and he would think of Mike Cochrane and forget the dirty trick I tried to play you that time you broke my arm when you should have broken my neck."

By this time he had again so broken down with emotion

and weakness that I thought it best to leave him. I pretended to pull a blanket up over him, and to lift the pillow under his head, but made it an excuse to give him a pat on the shoulder.

"I think you have talked enough," I said. "But of one thing you can be assured, Mike Cochrane, that neither Jimmy Martin nor I are ever again going to think of what happened aboard the *Esperanza*. You are one of us, and if I ever get anywhere, you are not going to want for a friend. You can bet your life on that!"

Again he clutched my hand, this time in both of his, and gripped it until I had to pull it away.

The kindness of the four allied ship-masters when we gained port had got to the point where they seemed eager to do more; for when we dropped anchor and Cochrane had been removed to a room in the hotel and put under a doctor's care, I returned to find that they had voluntarily rigged steam pumps across to the barge, and were sucking her dry, and that each had contributed his ship's carpenter to repair the damage as far as possible. They were four good fellows, were these ship-masters, and I am proud to say that they are still my friends. We had another dinner, this time with a considerably augmented crowd at the conclusion of which we went into a business session; and if the owners of those four ships could cruise as economically as was indicated by the bills which I demanded, and which the four ship-masters submitted, all records of economy, so far as I knew, in the maritime history of steamships, were badly broken by those four. They cleared port on the following morning, and some of them I was not to see again for some years; but we have never lost touch.

It was nearly a week later when all repairs we could possibly make were done, and Jimmy and I took stock of our enterprise. The *Sea-Gull* was now again worthy of her name; but the damage to our outfit was irreparable. We had the *Hector*, the *Sea-Gull*, a barge without cranes

or power, and two steel cylinders. We had no pontoons with which to continue our salvage operations, but we did have fair and settled weather. There seemed but one course left open, the one that we at last decided upon, which was that we must at least forestall any one else on the scene, hold possession of the ground, and in the meantime send the tug under Rogers on a northward cruise to purchase a new barge with full auxiliary equipment. I trusted him implicitly and had no hesitancy whatever in giving him full responsibility to purchase as best he could. The Sea-Gull could tow the barge to the sunken Esperanza, where we could anchor her securely, although aware that if another hurricane arose we should have to abandon her to her fate. She was comparatively useless for our purpose save as a floating platform from which to work. The Sea-Gull could then make for Key West, and there try to learn the nearest point where a salvage outfit, suitable for our needs, could be obtained. Inadequate as were all these plans, they were the best we could do, and we did not propose to run risks of some other wrecking outfit pre-empting our claims.

We succeeded in buying a wheezy old boiler and a winch, which we fastened to the deck of the barge, and enough chain and pieces of steel cable to fix our remaining cylinders to the wreck.

In the ten days while these preparations were being effected, Cochrane completely recovered, and was duly appointed captain of the barge on that day when the Sea-Gull took her under tow and we headed out of the harbor to renew the fight in which, so far, we had invariably been worsted. Jimmy Martin somewhat expressed my own thoughts when, aboard the Hector, and running light, we too cleared the harbor, and headed northward.

"There is one blessed sure thing," he said, "which is, that nothing more can happen to us than has already happened, so far as I can see. We started with that gold to land it in France; first, that treacherous dog, Klein,

did us out of our ammunition; then we were torpedoed; then we barely saved the plans of my invention; then we thought we could never buy a submarine, to try it on; then, when we thought we had everything our own way, we had to get the best of that fellow Vennemann; then the sea got to work and handed us a storm, which looked like a knock-out; and yet, by Heavens, we are still on the job! If we are licked in the end, it is a cinch it won't be because we gave up, eh?"

"Every bad lane has to come to an ending some time," I declared. "Bad luck can't last always; but it does seem to me as if we have had all that was coming to us, and that now we are out to win."

The day itself was beautiful, and the sea so propitious that a wooden man would have felt himself exhilarated and hopeful by merely living on it. The spirits of everybody aboard the *Hector* seemed at top-notch. I could hear one of the men, lounging on the exposed deck of the submarine beneath the bridge, from which we were steering, humming a ditty, and the voices that came up from the interior of the boat sounded cheerful and confident. The engines themselves seemed singing a song of strength and power. We caught up with the *Sea-Gull* and her tow, and the men of the *Sea-Gull* gave us a cheerful salute with their whistle. We ran ahead, dropping the tug-boat behind, and in my tiny cabin I was making my calculations for distance when a man came rushing below.

"A ship dead ahead, sir, direct on our course."

For a moment, so confident was I of our luck, I did n't give it more than a second thought, and went ahead with my task; but again I was interrupted.

"Mr. Martin's compliments, sir, but he thinks you would perhaps like to come to the bridge; because the ship seems standing still."

This time, alarmed, I hastened after him, and found that a strange and watchful silence had taken the place of careless well-being that had prevailed on the deck of the

Hector when I went below. Twisted Jimmy, with a dour face, handed me a glass.

"Somebody else on the job," he grunted. "It's another wrecking outfit, as sure as I am Jimmy Martin."

But already I had discovered this for myself. There could be no mistake. A huge sea-tug was lolling idly about the surface of that portion of the seas that we thought belonged to us, while a great, ungainly salvage outfit, made unmistakable by its huge cranes, was evidently anchored for the time being, and waiting while submarine explorations were being made. Nothing could have been more annoying. Here we were, with full knowledge of our own inability and with a not completely established claim to the *Esperanza*, threatened with a deadlock by some other outfit that had everything at its command. And then it dawned upon me that, unless the newcomer had some method equally as good as our own, we still had the immense advantage possessed by us in the *Hector*, and our ability to work beneath the waters as effectually as might any others who came in competition. All right, we would make another fight for it! But first of all we would find out whether this was to be a fair and square conflict, or whether we should be compelled to come to open warfare, as we had with Count von Vennemann and his crew.

As we drew closer, we discovered that this was no pigmy contestant, for the cruising boat itself was not a mere blue-water tug, but was a squat, powerful steamer, big enough to pull a liner across the Atlantic. Moreover, her appearance betokened a most exceptional fitting and care, for her deck-houses were large, and spick and span with white paint, and she looked as clean and well-kept as if she were actually a *Lady of the Seas*. She had an inordinately large bridge and was of an odd construction, inasmuch as she had a superstructure that indicated a commodious chartroom and commander's cabins behind it. Her appearance proved that she had been specially built by some one who not only had knowledge of the work she was to

perform, but also means to provide luxuries and comfort for her owners. It took but an ordinary nautical eye to pick out all these details, and I could but admire her build. We were "up against" some one who was no novice in the art of salvage. This was no fight with a retired officer from the German Navy. Whoever brought this outfit down was no experimentalist, chasing a hidden bonanza, but one who knew the difficulties to be met, and who had carefully made preparations to overcome them.

"We are not going to find this crowd asleep," Jimmy declared. "They know what we have come for. It will be a merry little party. What are you going to do?"

"Go aboard at once, of course," I said, "and find out whether it is to be a fight or a fair and decent game, in which honors to the first winner are conceded, and the beaten man withdraws. If we are going to have trouble, the sooner we know it the better."

"You are right about that," he said, "but it does seem rotten luck that everybody in the world is taking a chance on robbing us of our ship, for she is ours, after all. Hello! They are getting ready to hail us."

"All of which is useless," I replied grimly, "because I am not going to converse through a megaphone in a show like this. I have got to get close enough to talk face to face." And I immediately ordered our little boat made ready.

Evidently this preparation was also observed and noted aboard the intruder, because we were not given the accustomed greeting, and I saw that the men on the bridge waited for us. Three of them were plainly veteran mariners, and unaccustomed to anything approaching naval discipline, for they stood with their hands in their pockets, conversing together, as I boarded our little collapsible and put off. We rowed forward until I was almost beneath the port wing of the bridge, when I looked upward and saw the same gnarled three leaning over on their elbows and waiting for me to introduce myself.

"Storthing, ahoy," I called upward, as my men rested on their oars.

"You have it right," one of the gnarled three called down; "but who are you?"

"From the *Hector*, of New London," I replied. "May I come aboard?"

"Certainly! Why not?" roared this ancient mariner, with total disregard for all the prevailing forms of intercourse of the sea. "You will find a side ladder over there to starboard. Pull around."

I did so, and climbed up the teak steps. The three old men were waiting at the top with their fists still shoved into the pockets of their jackets. They were as nondescript a trio as one could well imagine, for there was nothing about them to indicate rank, and their spokesman, a man bearded as fiercely as a Norseman, wore a battered old derby hat, jammed down on his cranium. One of his companions, a gray-haired, twinkling-eyed man, had for a top piece a flapping sou'wester, and the third member of the party wore what looked like a cross between an ancient Cunard steward's cap and something that a golfer might have cherished as a mascot.

"Well, what can we do for you?" demanded their spokesman, half-belligerently.

"I am Captain Hale, the master of the *Hector* — the submarine you see over there," I said, by way of introduction, "and I should like to talk to the master of the *Storthing*."

"You are talking to him now," rumbled the bearded one. "I am Captain Bebbs, who happens at this time to be in charge of the *Storthing*, out to salvage the *Esperanza*, a ship that was lost hereabout when the war was on."

I could not have asked for more explicit information. He had given me everything in a nutshell. I saw no use in evading any issue, and so with equal bluntness retorted,

"That's what we came for, to salvage the *Esperanza*. She was my ship."

"Your ship! Your ship! What was this you said your name was? Hale? Tom Hale? I wonder if you are a son of old Tom Hale, who owned the *Esperanza* line?"

Again a mental picture of my father came before me, and I answered with pride, "The same; a son of old Tom Hale, who lost his life in Cotuit Bay."

The three ancient mariners interchanged looks, and their spokesman rumbled at me, as he scrutinized me from head to foot: "Oh! You must be the son of his that went into the Navy. You look all right; but I'll lay my head against a strand of rope yarn that you will never be half the man your dad was. I knew him, I did. But what did you come aboard to talk about?"

"Just this," I responded, not ill-pleased with what I took to be a tribute to my father's memory, "that as we are both out to salvage the ship I lost, and what there is aboard her, I want to know whether it is to be fair give-and-take, or whether we have got to fight it out between us as to which one first puts his mark aboard her. You may not believe it, but I have got mine already."

He grunted at me satirically, and was on the verge of uttering his views concerning the situation, when an unmistakable voice was heard that impelled me to whirl on my heels and come to an erect position.

"Lord! There is the owner," one of the veterans exclaimed, as he, too, turned, and I saw coming toward me, with her old free stride, and with the light of the free seas in her eyes, the girl I had known as Marty Sterritt, the woman of my dreams.

CHAPTER XXVI

OUR meeting was unexpected, distressing, and to me almost tragic. For an instant it seemed like a cruel scene staged by Fate, in which I stood as the victim. Nor could such a master stage manager as Fate have well arranged a more curious setting — a ship resting quietly on waters as blue as seas of fable; in the distance, on the horizon, islands, purple, faint, and soft, like islands of enchantment; a sky unflecked by clouds; a brilliant morning sun; and on the deck of that ship, strangely weather-beaten men, some gnarled, bearded, and twisted, all roughly clad, and all falling back to either side as if to make way for a peerless woman whose presence suggested that she herself was the Queen of the Seas. And I, standing there at the head of the side ladder alone, was for the moment dumb. That she was as astonished as I did not mitigate our mutual embarrassment. I saw her eyes widen, then cloud over with a strange coldness. I saw the flush that sprang to her face and swept over it, even as a wind-blown cloud crosses the face of the moon, and in passing leaves it more cold and pure than ever it seemed before. I found myself leaning toward her, about to cry out involuntarily, as if we two had been alone. But suddenly the pendulum of my senses swung backward, and I brought myself to realities and courtesies. She, too, seemed to recover, and gravely advanced toward me with her hand outheld, as if appealing for at least a show of friendship if not of forgiveness. She was the first to speak.

“Captain Hale,” she said, in that same old voice that had the strange quality of sea bells, “I had not expected to meet you here.”

I accepted her hand and bent above it, but could not speak. Some great kindness, or perhaps pity, caused her to relent sufficiently to save me from the stare of curious eyes, and she said, quite calmly:

"Inasmuch as I seem to be hostess on this occasion, perhaps it is better that you come with me to my quarters." And again I bowed and followed her, aware, without seeing, that her crew, all hardened salvagers, immediately dismissed us from mind, and gathered at the rail of their ship, from which vantage-point they might look down upon the submarine. We mounted the bridge, and then went back to the superstructure that I had previously noted, and into something like a tiny little reception-room, made delicate by her touch and taste, as if wherever she went she surrounded herself with refinement. Again, as we seated ourselves, there was a distressing pause, in which I waited, knowing that the turn of conversation must be directed by her. I am certain that outwardly she was more calm than I.

I was relieved when, without reference to our past relations, she began in a most matter-of-fact way, "I presume that tug with the tow which is approaching, as well as the submarine on which you came, are yours?"

"Not mine, but under my command," I replied, mentally thanking God that my voice had resumed its normal, and that I was able to speak without emotion.

"And doubtless you, too, Captain Hale, have come with the intention of salvaging the wreck of the *Esperanza*, which you lost nearly, if not quite, on this spot?"

"Naturally," I said.

"Then I take it we are competitors; is that not so?"

"In a measure, yes," I replied.

For an instant her eyes swept out in an appraising glance through the cabin windows, to where the *Sea-Gull*, with her poor, battered, patched barge in tow, was coming to a halt, and a faint little smile crept incautiously to the corners of her lips, and I knew she wondered what chance I could have of being the first to grapple this prize of the seas in a contest against such might as hers; for here she was, aboard as powerful a salvaging boat as there was afloat, and manned by the most skillful veterans the

Atlantic Ocean had ever known, those renowned men recruited from all corners of the globe by the Sterritt Wrecking Company, whose fame was world-wide. Here was everything, strength, equipment, and experience, such as no one might outdo. And then I recalled the capabilities of the *Hector*, and I could almost have pitied her for her supreme, unshaken confidence.

"Well," she said, again facing me, "there is one satisfaction, at least, in that it will be an honorable and fair fight, waged according to all decent rules of the seas."

"Must we fight it out, then?" I asked.

"Oh, of that," she said with a little laugh, "there can be no doubt. I dislike it, because I believe that you are entitled to great consideration. She was your ship. Under other circumstances —"

Her eyes shifted from mine with a troubled look, and I saw her close her lips tightly, as if in self-annoyance for having said something, or thought something, which she had not wished to utter. I wondered what it could be, and in that moment of wonderment there came to me with amazing swiftness a flood of perplexing questions concerning the incongruities that presented themselves to my brain now that it had had time to recover from the shock of our meeting and resume full clarity of reasoning. In the first place, why was she here at all? If this craft was Sterritt's, why was not the master wrecker himself aboard and in command, and if it were not Sterritt's, to whom did it belong? What had taken place between her and her husband, Count von Venne-mann, to make them rivals in the venture? It seemed impossible that this craft could have even the slightest connection with the *Gretchen*, which I had fought, disabled, and towed helpless into the shoals of those northward keys, in whose jaws I had left her securely locked. Bewildered by this rush of conflicting questions I blurted out, almost unthinkingly, "Is this a Sterritt outfit?"

A swift look of pain flashed through her eyes that I

could not interpret, but she answered, unfalteringly, "Yes, it is, and the last of them."

"Last? Last of them? And your father — is your father aboard?"

"My father," she answered softly, "died more than two years ago."

Shock and pain must have expressed themselves on my face; and, as if she comprehended my thought and found a common ground of sympathy, she unbent.

"Ah! You, too, loved him!"

"Even as my father before me did," I answered quietly.

For a moment we forgot all the intervening years and were back on the Bay of Naples — three of us, all filled with hope. It was a merciful respite from the consideration of our present position. She forgot our estrangement, and spoke with almost the freedom she might have employed had our old relations remained intact.

"He made a brave fight to the very end. He never surrendered, though the physicians told him it was hopeless. He thought and spoke of you more than of any one else at the last. He had watched you so long, and for so long had followed and reported to your father of your career, that it was as if he had learned to love you — as if you were his own son. Toward the last he worried me by — by — Of course I evaded and misled him! I could not tell him that — our letters had ceased."

She stopped, and glancing up I saw that she was staring into space with eyes that were cold, and that her lips had hardened to firmness. Even the quality of her voice was suppressed as she brusquely swept everything aside and resumed before I might formulate a question.

"He died believing that you and I were still friends. He had no fears. He had no regrets. He told me to tell you of his love. He had but one request, at the last, that he be taken out and buried in the sea. He said that were he to be encased in a coffin and surrounded by earth, he should feel himself confined, and that he wished

to rest as he had lived, quite free. A strange whimsy! But one that you and I can understand, because we are of the sea, as were those from which we sprang. I came home from Spezia, off whose shores I carried out his last wish, to find that my father had been betrayed. I was not rich, as we had believed. A man my father trusted had gambled. The company my father made was nearly bankrupt. I was well advised — and — I saved something — just a little. Enough to make my own fight. Friends of my father's and mine stood loyally behind me: those men you saw out there when you came aboard. It's hard for a woman to fight. Very hard! But they stood by, and I got this outfit together, and they came, most of them, as volunteers. They are men of the sort that my father employed, and seamen, all! One of them, the man you were talking to when I came down, could buy this boat, and for ten years has left the sea. But he came because he wished to have a part in the success of my father's only child. I've known them all — every man aboard this boat — since I was in pinafores and getting in the way when something was being done. They're not polite, these men, and would be bewildered and lost in places where you and I have been; but at heart they need feel no shame in the presence of the so-called great, who are, after all, less than they."

I started to speak; to tell her that I had not challenged the worth of those under her command; that I understood; but she raised her hand in an appeal for continuation, as if she had set for herself the task of explanation that must be gone through with uninterrupted.

"And I chose this project as a final hope. I kept track of your career as best I could. You did not of mine, which does n't matter now. The salvage of the *Esperanza* seemed the most promising opportunity of all. I took it. I put all I had left into the hazard."

There were questions rushing to my lips; but I waited for her to fill in the obvious gaps over which she had leapt.

To a certain extent she had been frank and outspoken, and it was no right of mine to ask for more than she chose to give, lest I intrude on her privacy. We were bound by the chains of a peculiar restraint, like a ship in irons. Anything I might ask concerning her relations with Count Waldo von Vennemann must be an impertinence, unwarranted the more because she had spoken frankly. It was her prerogative to give, not mine to ask. And, surmising that they two had come upon breakers and reefs that had wrecked them, I pitied them both at that moment, and for her happiness alone could have wished it otherwise. I had never been more ready and eager to lay my life at her feet than at that hour. I bled afresh from unhealed wounds. Whatever the rupture between them, the fault must have been his — the fault of the savage who threw away the jewel beyond all price. The silence between us became protracted beyond bearing, and she spoke again, with some strange impartation of gentleness, approaching the wistful.

“And you? You have prospered, I hope.”

“Prospered? Prospered!” I replied bitterly, thinking of the long fight that had culminated in this our meeting there in a southern sea. “No. I have but little. Nearly all that I have gained you can see out of the port window. Sometimes I think that half of me died that day I had a letter accepting my resignation from the service that I love. And — for God’s sake — what had I to hope for or to gain? Money? It is nothing but a servant to our needs! It can’t buy hope.”

I checked myself, lest I say too much; lest I say something to give her a feeling of participation in my despair. I lifted sullen eyes to her face, and saw that she was strangely moved. To compassion — pity for the fallen — I attributed her state. It hurt and annoyed.

“No, I have accomplished but little,” I continued, desperately intent on concealing all that I felt toward her. “They are all gone save me. My father —”

"I learned of his death and was grieved," she interjected.

"And after my mother left, and I found that I had but little, I went back to the sea," I said, condensing it all into a bald statement of facts. "I ran the blockade until I was worn to a wire edge, and then went South. There is no Esperanza Line now. I tried to keep it alive. I failed. I hoped for another. The hope was based upon the salvage of the ship I owned, the one that both of us seek."

I stopped and saw that she was grieved, and wished momentarily that I had left much unsaid; but reflection warned me that, however unpleasant truths might be, this was not the time to palter. Our understanding must be plain and complete. Yet I dreaded to bring into the conversation the name of the man who had played such a part in both our lives, and had mentally to lash myself to it.

"When I arrived here," I said bluntly, "I found another outfit on the ground before me. It belonged to, and was commanded by, Count Waldo von Vennemann in person."

"Vennemann! Here!" she exclaimed, in undisguised surprise, lifting her head and staring at me.

"Yes. And we came into conflict at once. He declared war on me, and — I fought him as best I could. It was several days prior to the big storm. I disabled his ship by stripping her propellers and towed him to the Petite Terre Keys, off Guadeloupe, where I beached him at high tide, and left him there, disabled."

I waited expectantly for her to express her opinion of my act; but by neither look nor word did she inform me of her attitude. She betrayed nothing more than a lively curiosity as to the means employed for such a bold performance.

"How on earth did you accomplish all that?" she asked, still regarding me with that curiously intent look.

"The submarine I command has modern appliances that enabled me to work on his screws, and has eighteen hundred horse power for a tow."

"Of course he fought back?" she asked.

"Yes, as best he could. Kept up a pretty hot rifle-fire; but it was harmless."

She appeared secretly amused, and shifted her gaze until she stared meditatively out over the sea. "Well, what then?" she asked after a time, but still without looking at me.

"I came back here towing a big working barge with pontoons, and began work. The storm caught us and swept away pontoons and barge. We lost all our cylinders but two, and the barge had to be patched up as best we could."

"Then," she said quietly, "you are not outfitted at this moment to accomplish much, even though you find the *Esperanza*?"

"No, we are not," I admitted with some reluctance. "But we have this advantage over any other comers — you, for instance. We have already located and inspected the wreck. By any other means than those at our disposal — that is, so far as I know of any other wrecking outfit than ours — the chances are all in our favor. The *Esperanza* lies in more than sixty fathoms of water!"

"Sixty fathoms! Sixty fathoms down, and you have inspected her?"

All the incredulity based on her great knowledge of the sea was voiced in her question.

"It is true," I asserted; "we have been to that depth, inspected her from all sides, and actually done some work on her hull."

"If any other man than you had told me that," she declared, "I should not believe it. You must have the most remarkable boat and appliances that ever put to sea."

"We have," I asserted confidently.

She moved restlessly, started from her seat, and for a moment stood frowning at the floor, perturbed. I felt sorry for her, knowing how great a blow had been given

her own hopes and ventures. I saw the struggle for composure, and it was a brave fight against disappointment.

"Then," she said, suddenly confronting me with a white face, "the *Esperanza* is yours, not mine. Yours by the honorable old rule of the sea that grants the first comer who succeeds, all rights. I must look for other salvage."

There it was again, that unconquerable fairness and bravery that lifted her above defeat to fresh endeavor, the same spirit that had imbued and upheld her sire through all vicissitudes to the very last. And yet I knew that I had dealt her something barely lighter than a death-blow, and that she saw her bright hope waning to blackness, her brave castle crumbling to ashes. It was more than I could endure thus to hurt the woman I loved. I sprang to my feet and held both hands toward her, calling, almost brokenly, "Marty! Marty! I —"

But her ears, more acute than mine, caught some sound without, and she flung up her hand in a gesture commanding restraint, and stood like one waiting an announcement. The wait was not long. A man came hurriedly to the door, tapped upon the lintel, and announced: "Another ship has come up astern, Miss Sterritt, and is putting off a boat. Looks like another wrecking outfit, and is called the *Gretchen*."

For an instant I stood bewildered by conflicting thoughts. Miss Sterritt! The *Gretchen*! And so she was not the Countess von Vennemann, and also I had not succeeded in eliminating the count from this royal game which had a fortune for a winner's prize! I ran out after the man, and looked from the bridge. Squat, ugly, and formidable, the *Gretchen* lay behind us, with smoke curling from her huge funnel. And, as the man had said, a boat had been lowered and was being pulled across the still sea by sturdy arms. In her stern sat the unmistakable man who had entered and conflicted with the greatest enterprises of my life, Vennemann. I whirled on my heels, and like one charging the capricious, vital obstacles

of life, hastened back to the woman I had left in her cabin. She had not followed me. She stood almost as I had left her, staring about her like one whose back is against the wall for the last fight. Unuttered words died on my lips, and the open, outstretched hands with which I had entered fell, rebuffed, to my sides. Her voice fell upon my ears as clearly and coldly as Arctic waves breaking over a storm-tossed bow upon bent and stripped shoulders.

"We have come to an explanation," she said: "an explanation that I could never have made. Tom, the moorings are off! Wait!"

She commanded, not I. She seemed suddenly to dominate with an inflexible resolve that could be neither argued against nor thrust aside. She stood so still and motionless, this woman I loved, making her valiant fight, and lone, that I was subdued, waiting, and in awe, for what counted as a long and portentous time. All the little sounds without were magnified to the extreme — the trudge of boots upon the bridge, the languid comments of those who stood upon the decks, the slight, persistent slap of tiny waves against the steel hull, the voice of a boatswain admonishing some apprentice for a failure to coil a rope. The bumping of the visiting boat at the foot of the Storthing's ladder; the steps of Vennemann ascending; his abrupt demand to be conducted to the ship's master; the semi-defiant, half-contemptuous response of the man addressed — were all audible while we two waited. The tragedy of a deferred reckoning was thumping itself into my brain as I stood with my eyes fixed expectantly upon the sunlit door through which he must enter. He came unprepared, confident and arrogant. At sight of us together, he stopped like a man suddenly confronted by the harsh, punitive hands of a justice that he had long evaded and hoped always to avoid. In that curious, strained stillness, I heard his surprised intake of breath. Neither Marty nor I spoke. We stood watching him, with a mutual and fervid hos-

tility. He was flustered. All the calmness and arrogance and self-assurance were stripped from him like a coat jerked from the shoulders of a pretender, and cast, contemptuously, upon turf. It was as if, in this climax, he had been bared. He halted as if held in a spell until he was precipitated to his fall by her voice.

“So, Count Waldo,” she said, “we are all together again! We three. Almost as if some One Above had intervened and brought us to confession. You lied to me! You lied to others! Of that I am convinced.”

He did not answer, but stood as if striving to find excuses. He tried to meet her eyes, failed, swept a glance that snarled toward me, then assumed as dull and vapid a blankness as ever was assumed by a German peasant before a Prussian drill-master.

“You told me, as a confidence — confidence filled with pretended regret! — that you had it from an indisputable source that Mr. Hale had certain heart entanglements at home; that his resignation had been demanded by his superior officers; and then denied that you had caused to be published an announcement that you and I were betrothed! And these were all lies, were n’t they?”

I stood amazed by these revelations, not one of which I had ever surmised. I could not summarize their portent and the influence they had exerted upon my life. A dull anger began to pervade me, arising with swift ascent to murderous intent, when her voice again swept scornfully through the waiting silence.

“You dare not answer! Why? Because you fear that I know the truth, and I do. I learned, when it was too late, that all you had said was untrue! You, a man of honor? Better that the very names of honor and truth be cast from our tongue than that such as you should use them! Better that women such as I had never been born than to be influenced to their unhappiness by such as you, when —”

She had not time to concede the pulsating, unleashed arraignment of her scorn. The quiet cabin became attenuated to the reach of my anger. A flash told me the whole sum of his perfidy. I have no recollections of what he said, beyond his attempted admission and apology, before I had swept a chair aside and had clutched my fingers in his throat. I recall no desire nor hope so great as when, in that moment, I sought to kill him, fervently, avidly, trusting that his sufferings might be prolonged. He struck blindly, his clenched fists falling unheeded on my face, as I lifted him upward, and with the frenzied, multiplied strength of rage, thrust him back against the cabin wall and pinned him against it, hoping that he might endure the agonies of a thousand deaths. The very existence of my being was absorbed in a chaotic tempest unleashed, in which I clung to him, feeling his struggles grow weaker, hearing the beating of my heart, the rush of my own blood, intermingled with his gurgling cries and the appeals of the woman I loved, and from whom I had been separated by his machinations. Her hands were clasped about mine, tugging to break them from their strangling hold. The world flamed red. All that I had ever been and ever might be were absorbed in the one mad yearning to finish that which I had begun, the termination of his life. No maniac could have been more desperately intent on his sole object than I, who was killing the man beneath my hands. I was aware that other hands, rough and vigorous, had intruded themselves, and were dragging me back from my prey. The men from the bridge, alarmed by the tumult, had responded to her appeals for aid and overpowered me. They clung to me tenaciously after they had dragged me away by dominating strength, and I awoke from my murderous nightmare to see that Count von Vennemann had fallen to the floor, that Marty was assisting him to arise, that the chair I had thrown aside in my fury was lying a crumpled mass of twisted wood, and that through the windows streamed the

white light of the sun and the blue, glancing reflections cast upward from the waves of the tropical sea. Panting and subdued, I shook an arm free, and ran my hand across my eyes like one awakening from a horrible spell.

"Let him go. He's all right now," a voice behind me ordered, and I found myself released. I looked around to face one of the twisted old men of her crew.

"Young Tom Hale," he said, with a wry grin, as he massaged a swollen spot on his face, "your dad was a bad man to handle when he was riled, but he had nothing on you!"

Vennemann was now on his feet, upheld by a man from the bridge. He rubbed his throat with his fingers and glared sullenly at me. He straightened his disordered cravat, pulled down the ends of his collar, that I had torn loose in my first rush, and muttered, "*Ach! Was ein verrückt Mann!*"

"Madman or not," I retorted, "you're lucky to be alive. One word more and I'll finish what I began."

I give him credit for bravery; for he stared at me defiantly and did not shrink from an issue that meant death to him.

"Brute strength has its values," he said significantly, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"And stupidity of intellect its shortcomings," I added.

I fought an impulse to attack him again, and knew that he knew what those impulses were; for he quailed and was relieved by the voice of the woman who stood between us, and commanded, with cool emphasis, her wishes.

"We shall put an end to this. My cabin is not a place for a brawl."

Humiliated, both Vennemann and I bowed our apologies, and she told her men to withdraw. They did so, after exchanging wise glances, as if aware that there was an undercurrent of which they had not been apprised. We waited until they had gone from sight and sound, the count still by the partition, I on the opposite side of the cabin, and Marty in the center, where the sea reflections,

glancing upward through the cabin window, flashed through her splendid hair, across her firmly moulded face, and into her wonderful eyes. They were filled with an infinite scorn when again she addressed the count.

"I had hoped never to see you again," she declared coldly. "But now I am glad that it was to be so, that I may tell you to your face, in the presence of the man about whom you lied, all that I found out. To me it is a great privilege. To you it is an opportunity to defend yourself, if you can conceive of anything to say."

He seemed to have forgotten my presence as he fixed his look upon her, and there were misery, shame, and yearning all portrayed. In a less profound silence his voice would have been inaudible; but now it carried with it a note of despair and appeal.

"I can say nothing, save that I loved you; that I wanted you more than anything in the world; and that when one is hopeless and desperate enough, he will stop at no means. You loved Tom Hale, and —"

"Stop!" she exclaimed; but I, with a leaping heart, saw the flush of color that passed over the side of her face before she could turn her head away from me, and knew that for once he had uttered a truth. I could not bear that anything of such glorious refinement and sacred worth as the inner shrine of her heart should be bared to and discussed by such a man. That would have been a sacrilege. I forced myself forward to spare her such ignominy.

"Does it not seem," I asked quietly, "that this has gone far enough? Can any of us gain anything by further words, or undo all that has been done? Then let us have it over with!"

I sensed her gratitude, although she did not face me.

"Vennemann," I said, eying him, "you have done harm enough to satisfy any one. It's a fairly big world; but so far as you and I are concerned, and although I am canceling everything behind, it will prove too small for

both of us if ever you intrude yourself in my affairs again. I trust you understand my meaning?"

For a long time he did not answer, save by a steady, ugly stare, and then, reading a relentless determination in my look, wavered, and as if resolved to pretend an unbroken front, shrugged his shoulders impatiently, made a slight gesture with his hands, and said: "We shall not be too far apart to suit me; but of this you can be sure, Hale, that if I had it to do over again you would not be here and alive! It was in that that I was a fool!"

He seemed, through his own words, to lose control of himself again, and, raising his voice, vented his anger:

"If I had to do it over again, my Government could have gone to hell for the plans I was ordered to get from a man aboard your ship, and I'd have given all I had, and all I ever hoped to have, for the opportunity of putting you where I put the *Esperanza*! You got the best of it when you disabled the *Gretchen*; but it did n't last, because you were too soft! You thought you had us fast when you left us in those cursed keys; but you had n't! The storm lifted us off, and we got a tow and were repaired in the nearest port. I came back here, hoping to find you and your rotten little outfit. Do you know why? Because I wanted to sink you, and drown the lot of you, more than I ever wished to do anything in my life. I'd have shown you what a fight means, you big, ugly —"

"Marty!" I exclaimed, appealing to her. "Do I have to stand here aboard your ship and listen to this abuse?"

As if terrified by what might doubtless become a tragedy, she swung toward me, crying: "Tom! Tom! Don't! Pay no attention to him! He's not worth it!"

I drew back and felt my flexed muscles relax.

"Mr. Vennemann," she said, turning toward him, "you are no longer welcome aboard the *Storthing*. Please go now. And perhaps it would be as well for me to warn you of this: that if you attempt to interfere with Mr. Hale's work, you will have not only him but the men of

the Storthing also to fight. Common sense will warn you that you can hope for nothing but defeat. If you have any knowledge of decency left, you will go immediately from a place where you are not welcome, and — I hope to forget you!"

She stepped swiftly to the door and called, "Mr. Marvin, will you see Captain Vennemann to his boat?"

A man's voice, heavy and deep from long sea command, responded, "Aye! Aye! Miss Sterritt." And before the echoes had dwindled away one of the men I had seen on the bridge loomed hugely in the door.

Vennemann bowed deeply before the woman who had given him his *congé*, but she neither acknowledged his parting salute nor favored him with a look. He bestowed on me a final scowl, that I fancy I returned with compound interest, and was gone.

Marty and I heard the sounds of his departure. They died away and normal tones resumed from without: the same languid slapping of the sea; the same subdued but animated conversation; the very words of the men of the Storthing calling questions to those aboard the *Hector*, and the faint replies. Suddenly I was aware that she had not faced me for a long time, and stood poised upon her feet as though all bravery had left her, and that she might at any moment rush away from this portentous page of our lives, and from me. In a panic of apprehension lest I lose again this precarious footing, this coveted ambition of love and life, I sprang toward her, crying aloud her name. Aye! Crying it aloud as a drowning, dying man, spent and feeling his bleeding fingers slipping from the last rock of hope, cries for succor. I could say no more. I had not the need; for swiftly she turned toward me with compassion and relinquishment in her eyes, and was in my arms.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE tale itself is told; but the log runs in the waves, still whirling if the ship survives the storm. And those to whom the log-book is submitted when the voyage is complete demand many — perhaps minor — records of the cruise. A ship's master must satisfy the Board of Trade that his record may be kept clean and unsullied by neglect. So thus do I, a mariner, fill in my blank and waiting lines!

There was but a smudge of smoke on the horizon, a smudge that steadily diminished, when I stepped from the cabin on that day, and, looking eastward, knew that the *Gretchen* was steaming away to other fields. She never succeeded in reaching any earthly port. Whether by storm or accident she came to her end, no man knows. But she never entered a harbor, and sometimes, meditative, I strive to conjecture what must have been the end of those aboard her, including the man, nobleman by descent, mind you, who had robbed me of three years of happiness. All other interjections seem trivial now, so quickly does happiness heal ancient wounds.

That Marty had written me letters which I never received; that explanations had been possible, but were cut off by the change in my own life when I returned to the broad and open seas; that had I been less credulous, and possessed of purpose and daring to lead me across the world to find her and to have demanded my own, are all misfortunes gone their insignificant way into the vast realm of human errors and chances. What does matter, for the completion of my log-book, are a few more sentences easily written in but a few words, and yet to me important because they blend in a splendid summary of all that makes life worthy and dear.

We combined our forces, Marty and I, and raised the

Esperanza and all her precious cargo; recovered both. Battered and old, she is still the favorite ship of the growing fleet that is ours, and when, sick of the land, we strike for the clean, wind-scoured, open spaces of the seas, bent upon strange destinations, we board her and come thus to our own. We cruise together to far and isolated isles, set like jewels in the girdle of romance, in placid and unfrequented seas. Once we had two guests, Monsieur Périgord and that man whose name is now widely known, Jimmy Martin. Monsieur Périgord no longer fares forth on earthly expeditions. I doubt not that in some place Beyond he lives, as he merited in this sphere, happily, the possessor of a great, loyal, and unselfish heart. There will be statues to his memory in the far lands of Périgord, and those places where the soul of France, human, tender, keeps alight the unquenchable fires upon her altar stones.

Jimmy Martin comes with us on these excursions of ours. He is bent, old, irascible, and argumentative. Nothing, save the fact that he is renowned, acclaimed, and affluent, is much different from what it was.

The smoke of the Esperanza Steamship Company is wafted wide. There is no sea upon which its blue, red, and white funnels are not familiar. Perhaps there are those who envy me my wealth; others who envy Rogers, the commodore of our line, his position; others who believe that Mike Cochrane does but little to merit his easy berth ashore; but none of them know as well as I that nothing is worth envying when compared with the priceless treasure of a woman's love and trust.

True, there flies upon the seven seas the flag of the line my father named; but there flies on the sea of my content a banner peerless, the flag of my heart that is raised loyally throughout sunrise and sunset, the flag that she commands, that wavers not nor lowers, that is mine to salute with constant wonder and enduring reverence, the one that idealizes and visualizes to me — my wife!

The log-book is dogeared by stress and storm and striving hands; but it is all that I can tender to those who read. It is unimportant; but it has this virtue, that I have given it as the best that I could give, and no man may do more in this, our great and mutual voyage, than to give until the cruise is done.

THE END

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